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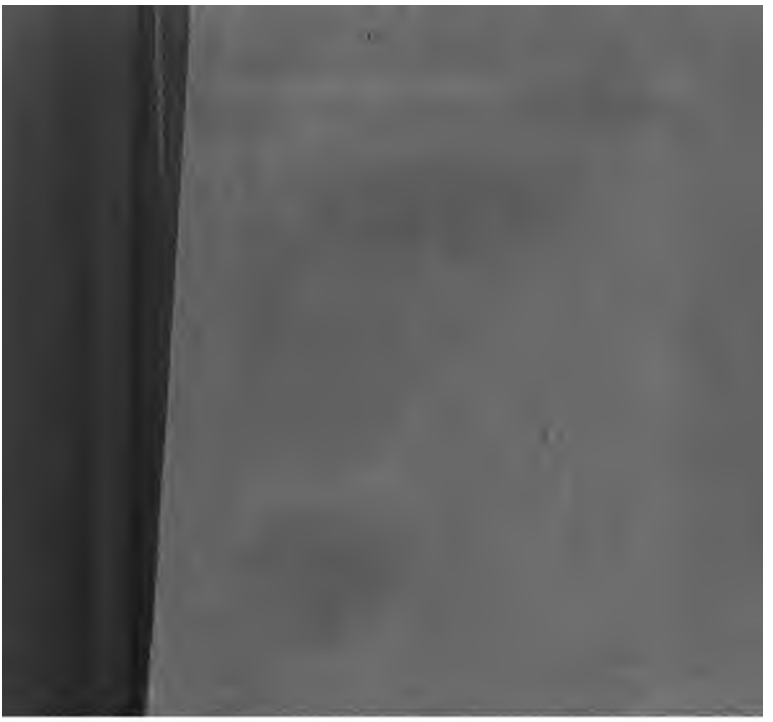

OCT 11 1913

THE

WORKS

OF

CHARLES LAMB.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED,

HIS LETTERS,

AND

A SKETCH OF HIS LIFE,

BY

THOMAS NOON TALFOURD,

ONE OF HIS EXECUTORS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE

LETTERS

OF

CHARLES LAMB.

WITH

A SKETCH OF HIS LIFE,

BY

THOMAS NOON TALFOURD,

ONE OF HIS EXECUTORS.

TO

MARY ANNE LAMB

These Letters,

THE MEMORIALS OF MANY YEARS WHICH SHE SPENT WITH THE WRITER IN UNDIVIDED AFFECTION;

OF THE SORROWS AND THE JOYS SHE SHARED;

OF

THE GENIUS WHICH SHE CHERISHED;

AND OF

THE EXCELLENCES WHICH SHE BEST KNEW,

ARE RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,

BY THE EDITOR.

PREFACE.

THE share of the editor in these volumes can scarcely be regarded too slightly. The successive publications of Lamb's works form almost the only events of his life which can be recorded; and upon these criticism has been nearly exhausted. Little, therefore, was necessary to accompany the letters, except such thread of narrative as might connect them together, and such explanations as might render their allusions generally understood. The reader's gratitude for the pleasure which he will derive from these memorials of one of the most delightful of English writers, is wholly due to his correspondents, who have kindly intrusted the precious relics to the care of the editor, and have permitted them to be given to the world; and to Mr. Moxon, by whose interest and zeal they have been chiefly collected. He may be allowed to express his personal sense of the honour which he has received in such trust from men, some of whom are among the greatest of England's living authors: to Wordsworth, Southey, Manning, Barton, Procter, Gilman, Patmore, Walter Wilson, Field, Robinson, Dyer, Carey, Ainsworth, to Mr. Green, the executor of Coleridge, and to the surviving relatives of Hazlitt. He is also most grateful to Lamb's esteemed schoolfellow, Mr. Le Grice, for supplying an interesting part of his history, and to Mr. Montague and Miss Beetham for the remembered snatches of his conversation which accompany the closing chapter. Of the few additional facts of Lamb's history, the chief have been supplied by Mr. Moxon, in whose welfare he took a most affectionate interest to the close of his life, and who has devoted some beautiful sonnets to his memory.

The recentness of the period of some of the letters has

rendered it necessary to omit many portions of them, in which the humour and beauty are interwoven with personal references, which, although wholly free from anything which, rightly understood, could give pain to any human being, touch on subjects too sacred for public exposure. Some of the personal allusions which have been retained may seem, perhaps, too free to a stranger; but they have been retained only in cases in which the editor is well assured the parties would be rather gratified than displeased at seeing their names connected in lifelike association with one so dear to their memories.

The italics and the capitals are invariably those indicated by the MSS. It is to be regretted that in the printed letters the reader must lose the curious varieties of writing with which the originals abound, and which are scrupulously adapted to the subjects. The letters are usually undated. Where the date occurs it has generally been given; and much trouble has been necessary to assign to many of the letters (the postmarks of which are not legible) their proper place, and perhaps not always with complete success.

Many letters yet remain unpublished, which will further illustrate the character of Mr. Lamb, but which must be reserved for a future time, when the editor hopes to do more justice to his own sense of the genius and the excellences of his friend than it has been possible for him to accomplish in these volumes.

T. N. T.

Russell Square, 26th June, 1837.

LETTERS, &c.,

OF

CHARLES LAMB.

CHAPTER I.

[1775 to 1796.]

Lamb's Parentage, Schooldays, and Youth, to the Commencement of his Correspondence with Coleridge.

CHARLES LAMB was born on the 18th February, 1775, in Crown-office Row, in the Inner Temple, where he spent the first seven years of his life. His parents were in a humble station, but they were endued with sentiments and with manners which might well become the gentlest blood; and fortune, which had denied them wealth, enabled them to bestow on their children some of the happiest intellectual advantages which wealth ever confers. His father, Mr. John Lamb, who came up a little boy from Lincoln, fortunately, both for himself and his master, entered into the service of Mr. Salt, one of the benchers of the Inner Temple, a widower, who, growing old within its precincts, was enabled to appreciate and to reward his devotedness and intelligence; and to whom he became, in the language of his son, "his clerk, his good servant, his dresser, his friend, his flapper, his guide, stopwatch, auditor, treasurer."* Although contented with his lot, and dis-

* Lamb has given characters of his father (under the name of Lovel) and of Mr. Salt in one of the most exquisite of all the Essays of Elia, "The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple." Of Lovel he says, "He was a man of an incorrigible and losing honesty. A good fellow withal, and could smite. In the cause of the oppressed he never considered inequalities, or calculated the number of his opponents. He once wrested a sword out of the hand of a man of quality that had drawn upon him, and pommelled him severely with the hilt of it. The swordsman had offered insult to a female, an occasion upon which no odds against him could have prevented the interference of Lovel. He would stand next day bareheaded to the same person, modestly to excuse his interference; for L. never forgot rank where something better was not concerned. L. was the liveliest little fellow breathing; had a face as gay as Garrick's, whom he was said greatly to resemble; possessed a fine turn for humorous poetry—next to Swift and Prior; moulded heads in clay or plaster

charging its duties with the most patient assiduity, he was not without literary ambition; and, having written some occasional verses to grace the festivities of a benefit society of which he was a member, was encouraged by his brother members to publish, in a thin quarto, "Poetical Pieces on several occasions." This volume contains a lively picture of the life of a lady's footman of the last century; the "History of Joseph," told in well-measured, heroic couplets; and a pleasant piece after the manner of "Gay's Fables," entitled the "Sparrow's Wedding," which was the author's favourite, and which, when he fell into the dotage of age, he delighted to hear Charles read.* His wife was a woman of appearance so matronly and commanding that, according to the recollection of one of Lamb's dearest schoolmates, "she might be taken for a sister of Mrs. Siddons." This excellent couple were blessed with three children, John, Mary, and Charles; John being twelve and Mary ten years older than Charles. John, who is vividly described in the essays of Elia, entitled "My Relations," under the name of James Elia, rose to fill a lucrative office in the South Sea House, and died a few years ago, having to the last fulfilled the affectionate injunction of Charles to "keep the elder brother up in state." Mary (the Bridget of the same essay) still survives, to mourn the severance of a life-long association, as free from every alloy of selfishness, as remarkable for moral beauty, as this world ever witnessed in brother and sister.

of Paris to admiration, by dint of natural genius merely; turned cribbage-boards and such small toys to perfection; took a hand at quadrille or bowls with equal facility; made punch better than any man of his degree in England; had the merriest quips and conceits; and was altogether as brimful of rogueries and inventions as you could desire. He was a brother of the angle, moreover, and just such a free, hearty, honest companion as Mr. Izaak Walton would have chosen to go a fishing with.—*Prose Works*, vol. i., p. 104.

* The following little poem, entitled "A Letter from a Child to its Grandmother," written by Mr. John Lamb for his eldest son, though possessing no merit beyond simplicity of expression, may show the manner in which he endeavoured to discharge his parental duties:—

"Dear Grandam,
Pray to God to bless
Your grandson dear with happiness;
That, as I do advance each year,
I may be taught my God to fear;
My little frame from passion free,
To man's estate from infancy;
From vice, that turns a youth aside,
And to have wisdom for my guide;
That I may neither lie nor swear,
But in the path of virtue steer;
My actions generous, firm, and just,
Be always faithful to my trust;
And thee the Lord will ever bless.
Your grandson dear,
JOHN L——, the Less.

On the 9th of October, 1782, when Charles Lamb had attained the age of seven, he was presented to the school of Christ's Hospital by Timothy Yeates, Esq., governor, as "the son of John Lamb, scrivener, and Elizabeth his wife," and remained a scholar of that noble establishment till he had entered into his fifteenth year. Small of stature, delicate of frame, and constitutionally nervous and timid, he would seem unfitted to encounter the discipline of a school formed to restrain some hundreds of lads in the heart of the metropolis, or to fight his way among them. But the sweetness of his disposition won him favour from all; and although the antique peculiarities of the school tinged his opening imagination, they did not sadden his childhood. One of his schoolfellows, of whose genial qualities he has made affectionate mention in his "Recollections of Christ's Hospital," Charles V. Le Grice, now of Trerieſe, near Penzance, has supplied me with some particulars of his schooldays, for which friends of a later date will be grateful. "Lamb," says Mr. Le Grice, "was an amiable, gentle boy, very sensible, and keenly observing, indulged by his schoolfellows and by his master on account of his infirmity of speech. His countenance was mild; his complexion clear brown, with an expression which might lead you to think that he was of Jewish descent. His eyes were not each of the same colour: one was hazel, the other had specks of gray in the iris, mingled as we see red spots in the bloodstone. His step was plantigrade, which made his walk slow and peculiar, adding to the staid appearance of his figure. I never heard his name mentioned without the addition of Charles, although, as there was no other boy of the name of Lamb, the addition was unnecessary; but there was an implied kindness in it, and it was a proof that his gentle manners excited that kindness.

"His delicate frame and his difficulty of utterance, which was increased by agitation, unfitted him for joining in any boisterous sport. The description which he gives in his 'Recollections of Christ's Hospital' of the habits and feelings of the schoolboy, is a true one in general, but is more particularly a delineation of himself—the feelings were all in his own heart—the portrait was his own: 'While others were all fire and play, he stole along with all the self-concentration of a young monk.' These habits and feelings were awakened and cherished in him by peculiar circumstances; he had been born and bred in the Inner Temple; and his parents continued to reside there while he was at school, so that he passed from cloister to cloister, and this was all the change his young mind ever knew. On every half-holyday (and there

were two in the week) in ten minutes he was in the gardens, on the terrace, or at the fountain of the Temple: here was his home; here his recreation; and the influence they had on his infant mind is vividly shown in his description of the old Benchers. He says, 'I was born and passed the first seven years of my life in the Temple;' he might have added, that here he passed a great portion of the second seven years of his life, a portion which mixed itself with all his habits and enjoyments, and gave a bias to the whole. Here he found a happy home, affectionate parents, and a sister who watched over him to the latest hour of his existence (God be with her!) with the tenderest solicitude; and here he had access to the library of Mr. Salt, one of the benchers, to whose memory his pen has given in return for this and greater favours—I do not think it extravagant to say—immortality. To use his own language, 'Here he was tumbled into a spacious closet of good old English reading, where he browsed at will upon that fair and wholesome pasturage.' He applied these words to his sister; but there is no doubt they 'browsed' together; they had walked hand in hand from a time 'extending beyond the period of their memory.'"

When Lamb left school, he was in the lower division of the second class—which, in the language of the school, is termed "being in Greek, but not Deputy Grecian." He had read Virgil, Sallust, Terence, selections from Lucian's Dialogues, and Xenophon; and had evinced considerable skill in the niceties of Latin composition, both in prose and verse. His docility and aptitude for the attainment of classical knowledge would have ensured him an exhibition; but to this the impediment in his speech proved an insuperable obstacle. The exhibitions were given under the implied, if not expressed condition of entering into the church; the whole course of education was preparatory to that end; and, therefore, Lamb, who was unfitted by nature for the clerical profession, was not adopted into the class which led to it, and left school to pursue the uncongenial labour of the "desk's dull wood." To this apparently hard lot he submitted with cheerfulness, and saw his schoolfellows of his own standing depart, one after another, for the University, without a murmur. This acquiescence in his different fortune must have been a hard trial for the sweetness of his disposition; as he always, in after life, regarded the ancient seats of learning with the fondness of one who had been hardly divorced from them. He delighted, when other duties did not hinder, to pass his vacations in their neighbourhood, and indulge in that *fancied* association with them which he has so beautifully

mirrored in his "Sonnets written at Cambridge."* What worldly success can, indeed, ever compensate for the want of timely nurture beneath the shade of one of these venerable institutions; for the sense of antiquity shading, not checking, the joyous impulses of opening manhood; for the refinement and the grace there interfused into the long labour of ambitious study; for young friendships consecrated by the associations of long past time; and for liberal emulation, crowned by successes restrained from ungenerous and selfish pride by palpable symbols of the genius and the learning of ages?

On 23d November, 1789, Lamb finally left Christ's Hospital for the abode of his parents, who still resided in the Temple. At first he was employed in the South Sea House, under his brother John; but, on 5th of April, 1792, he obtained an appointment in the accountant's office of the East India Company. His salary, though then small, was a welcome addition to the scanty means of his parents; who now were unable, by their own exertions, to increase it, his mother being in ill health, which confined her to her bed, and his father sinking into dotage. On their comfort, however, this, and, what was more precious to him, his little leisure, were freely bestowed; and his recreations were confined to a delightful visit to the two shilling gallery of the theatre, in company with his sister, and an occasional supper with some of his schoolmates, when in town, from Cambridge. On one of these latter occasions he obtained the appellation of *Guy*, by which he was always called among them; but of which few of his late friends heard till after his death. "In the first year of his clerkship," says Mr. Le Grice, in the communication with which he favoured me, "Lamb spent the evening of the 5th November with some of his former schoolfellows, who, being amused with the particularly large and flapping brim of his round hat, pinned it up on the sides in the form of a cocked-hat. Lamb made no alteration in it,

* I was not train'd in academic bowers,
And to those learned streams I nothing owe
Which copious from those fair twin founts do flow;
Mine have been anything but studious hours.
Yet can I fancy wandering mid thy towers
Myself, a nursling, Granta, of thy lap;
My brow seems tightening with the doctor's cap,
And I walk gown'd: feel unusual powers.
Strange forms of logic clothe my admiring speech;
Old Rama's ghost is busy at my brain;
And my scull teems with notions infinite.
Be still, ye reed of Comus, while I teach
Truths which transcend the searching schoolman's vein,
And half had stagger'd that stout Stagyrite!

but walked home in his usual sauntering gait towards the Temple. As he was going down Ludgate-hill, some gay young men, who seemed not to have passed the London Tavern without resting, exclaimed, 'the veritable Guy!—no man of straw!' and with this exclamation they took him up, making a chair with their arms, carried him, seated him on a post in St. Paul's churchyard, and there left him. This story Lamb told so seriously that the truth of it was never doubted. He wore his three-cornered hat many evenings, and retained the name of Guy ever after. Like Nym, he quietly sympathized in the fun, and seemed to say, 'that was the humour of it.' A clergyman of the city lately wrote to me, 'I have no recollection of Lamb. There was a gentleman called Guy, to whom you once introduced me, and with whom I have occasionally interchanged nods for more than thirty years; but how is it that I never met Mr. Lamb? If I was ever introduced to him, I wonder that we never came in contact during my residence for ten years in Edmonton.' Imagine this gentleman's surprise when I informed him that his nods to Mr. Guy had been constantly reciprocated by Mr. Lamb!"

During these years Lamb's most frequent companion was James White, or rather Jem White, as he always called him. Lamb always insisted that for hearty joyous humour, tinged with Shakspearian fancy, Jem never had an equal. "Jem White!" said he to Mr. Le Grice, when they met for the last time, after many years' absence, at the Bell at Edmonton, in June, 1833, "there never was his like! We never shall see such days as those in which Jem flourished!" All that now remains of Jem is the celebration of the suppers which he gave the young chimney-sweepers, in the Elia of his friend, and a thin duodecimo volume, which he published in 1796, under the title of the "Letters of Sir John Falstaff, with a dedication (printed in black letter) to Master Samuel Irelaunde," which those who knew Lamb at the time believed to be his. "White's Letters," said Lamb, in a letter to a friend about this time, "are near publication. His frontispiece is a good conceit; Sir John learning to dance to please Madame Page, in dress of doublet, &c., from the upper half, and modern pantaloons, with shoes of the eighteenth century, from the lower half, and the whole work is full of goodly quips and rare fancies, 'all deeply masked like hoar antiquity'—much superior to Dr. Kendrick's 'Falstaff's Wedding.'" The work was neglected, although Lamb exerted all the influence he subsequently acquired with more popular writers to obtain for it favourable notices, as will be seen *from* various passages in his letters. He stuck, however,

gallantly by his favourite protégé; and even when he could little afford to disburse sixpence, he made a point of buying a copy of the book whenever he discovered one amid the refuse of a bookseller's stall, and would present it to a friend in the hope of making a convert. He gave me one of these copies soon after I became acquainted with him, stating that he had purchased it in the morning for sixpence, and assuring me I should enjoy a rare treat in the perusal; but, if I must confess the truth, the mask of quaintness was so closely worn, that it nearly concealed the humour. To Lamb it was, doubtless, vivified by the eye and voice of his old boon companion, forming to him an undying commentary, without which it was comparatively spiritless. Alas! how many even of his own most delicate fancies, rich as they are in feeling and in wisdom, will be lost to those who have not present to them the sweet broken accents, and the half playful, half melancholy smile of the writer!

But if Jem White was the companion of his lighter moods, the friend of his serious thoughts was a person of far nobler powers—Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It was his good fortune to be the schoolfellow of that extraordinary man; and if no particular intimacy had been formed between them at Christ's Hospital, a foundation was there laid for a friendship to which the world is probably indebted for all that Lamb has added to its sources of pleasure. Junior to Coleridge by two years, and far inferior to him in all scholastic acquirements, Lamb had listend to the rich discourse of "the inspired charity-boy" with a wondering delight, pure from all envy, and, it may be, enhanced by his sense of his own feebleness and difficulty at expression. While Coleridge remained at the University they met occasionally on his visits to London; and when he left it, and came to town, full of mantling hopes and glorious schemes, Lamb became his admiring disciple. The scene of these happy meetings was a little public-house, called the Salutation and Cat, in the neighbourhood of Smithfield, where they used to sup, and remain long after they had "heard the chimes of midnight." There they discoursed of Bowles, who was the god of Coleridge's poetical idolatry, and of Burns and Cowper, who, of recent poets, in that season of comparative barrenness, had made the deepest impression on Lamb. There Coleridge talked of "Fate, freewill, foreknowledge absolute" to one who desired "to find no end" of the golden maze; and there he recited his early poems with that deep sweetness of intonation which sunk into the heart of his hearer. To these meetings Lamb was accustomed, at all periods of his life, to revert as the season when his finer intellects were quickened

into action. Shortly after they had terminated, with Coleridge's departure for London, he thus recalled them in a letter.* "When I read in your little volume the effusion you call 'the Sigh,' I think I hear you again. I imagine to myself the little smoky room at the Salutation and Cat, where we sat together through the winter nights beguiling the cares of life with poetry." This was early in 1796; and in 1818, when dedicating his works, then first collected, to his earliest friend, he thus spoke of the same meetings. "Some of the sonnets, which shall be carelessly turned over by the general reader, may happily awaken in you remembrances which I should be sorry to doubt are totally extinct—the memory 'of summer days and of delightful years,' even so far back as those old suppers at our old inn—when life was fresh, and topics exhaustless—and you first kindled in me, if not the power, yet the love of poetry, and beauty, and kindliness." And so he talked of these unforgotten hours in that short interval during which death divided them!

The warmth of Coleridge's friendship supplied the quickening impulse to Lamb's genius; but the germe unfolding all its nice peculiarities lay ready for the influence, and expanded into forms and hues of its own. Lamb's earliest poetry was not a faint reflection of Coleridge's, such as the young lustre of original genius may cast on a polished and sensitive mind, to glow and tremble for a season, but was streaked with delicate yet distinct traits, which proved it an emanation from within. There was, indeed, little resemblance between the two, except in the affection which they bore towards each other. Coleridge's mind, not laden as yet with the spoils of all systems and of all times, glowed with the ardour of uncontrollable purpose, and thirsted for glorious achievement and universal knowledge. The imagination, which afterward struggled gloriously, but perhaps vainly, to overmaster the stupendous clouds of German philosophies, breaking them into huge masses, and tinting them with heavenly hues, then shone through the simple articles of Unitarian faith, the graceful architecture of Hartley's theory, and the well-compacted chain by which Priestley and Edwards seemed to bind all things in necessary connexion, as through transparencies of thought; and, finding no opposition worthy of its activity in this poor foreground of the mind, opened for itself a bright succession of fairy visions, which it sought to realize on earth. In its

* This, with other passages I have interwoven with my own slender thread of narration, are from letttters which I have thought either too personal for entire publication at present, or not of sufficient interest, in comparison with others, to occupy a portion of the space to which the letters are limited.

light, oppression and force seemed to vanish like the phantoms of a feverish dream; mankind were disposed in the picturesque groups of universal brotherhood; and, in far distance, the ladder which Jacob saw in solemn vision connected earth with heaven, "and the angels of God were ascending and descending upon it." Lamb had no sympathy with these radiant hopes, except as they were part of his friend. He clung to the realities of life; to things nearest to him, which the force of habit had made dear; and caught tremblingly hold of the past. He delighted, indeed, to hear Coleridge talk of the distant and future; to see the palm-trees wave and the pyramids tower in the long perspective of his style; and to catch the prophetic notes of a universal harmony trembling in his voice; but the pleasure was only that of admiration unalloyed by envy, and of the generous pride of friendship. The tendency of his mind to detect the beautiful and good in surrounding things, to nestle rather than to roam, was cherished by all the circumstances of his boyish days. He had become familiar with the vestiges of antiquity, both in his school and in his home of the Temple; and these became dear to him in his serious and affectionate childhood. But, perhaps, more even than those external associations, the situation of his parents, as it was elevated and graced by their character, moulded his young thoughts to the holy habit of a liberal obedience and unaspiring self-respect, which led rather to the embellishment of what was near than to the creation of visionary forms. He saw at home the daily beauty of a cheerful submission to a state bordering on the servile; he looked upward to his father's master, and the old benchers who walked with him on the stately terrace, with a modest erectness of mind; and he saw in his own humble home how well the decencies of life could be maintained on slender means by the exercise of generous principle. Another circumstance, akin to these, tended also to impart a tinge of venerableness to his early musings. His maternal grandmother was for many years housekeeper in the old and wealthy family of the Plumers of Hertfordshire, by whom she was held in true esteem; and his visits to their ancient mansion, where he had the free range of every apartment, gallery, and terraced walk, gave him "a peep at the contrasting accidents of a great fortune," and an alliance with that gentility of soul which to appreciate is to share. He has beautifully recorded his own recollections of this place in the essay entitled, "Blakesmoor in H——shire," in which he modestly vindicates his claim to partake in the associations of ancestry not his own, and shows the true value of high lineage by detecting the spirit of nobleness which breathes around it,

for the enkindling of generous affections, not only in those who may boast of its possession, but in all who can feel its influences.

While the bias of the minds of Coleridge and Lamb thus essentially differed, it is singular that their opinions on religion, and on those philosophical questions which border on religious belief, and receive their colour from it, agreed, although probably derived from various sources. Both were Unitarians, ardent admirers of the writings and character of Dr. Priestley, and both believers in necessity, according to Priestley's exposition, and in the inference which he drew from that doctrine respecting moral responsibility and the ultimate destiny of the human race. The adoption of this creed arose in Lamb from the accident of education; he was brought up to receive and love it; and attended, when circumstances permitted, at the chapel at Hackney, of which Mr. Belsham, afterward of Essex-street, was then the minister. It is remarkable that another of Lamb's most intimate friends, in whose conversation, next to that of Coleridge, he most delighted, Mr. Hazlitt, with whom he became acquainted at a subsequent time, and who came from a distant part of the country, was educated in the same faith. With Coleridge, whose early impressions were derived from the rites and services of the Church of England, Unitarianism was the result of a strong conviction; so strong that, with all the ardour of a convert, he sought to win proselytes to his chosen creed, and purposed to spend his days in preaching it. Neither of these young men, however, long continued to profess it. Lamb, in his mature life, rarely alluded to matters of religious doctrine; and, when he did so, evinced no sympathy with the professors of his once-loved creed. Hazlitt wrote of his father, who was a Unitarian minister at Wem, with honouring affection; and of his dissenting associates with respect, but he had obviously ceased to think or feel with them; and Coleridge's Remains indicate, what was well known to all who enjoyed the privilege of his conversation, that he not only reverted to a belief in the Trinitarian mysteries, but that he was accustomed to express as much distaste for Unitarianism, and for the spirit of its more active advocates, as the benignity of his nature would allow him to feel for any human opinion honestly cherished. Perhaps this solitary approach to intolerance in the universality of Coleridge's mind arose from the disapproval with which he might justly regard his own pride of understanding, as excited in defence of the doctrines he had adopted. To him there was much of devotional thought to be violated, many reverential associations, intertwined with the moral being,

to be rent away in the struggle of the intellect to grasp the doctrines which were alien to its nurture. But to Lamb these formed the simple creed of his childhood; and slender and barren as they seem to those who are united in religious sympathy with the great body of their fellow-countrymen, they sufficed for affections which had so strong a tendency to find out resting-places for themselves as his. Those who only knew him in his latter days, and who feel that if ever the spirit of Christianity breathed through a human life it breathed in his, will nevertheless trace with surprise the extraordinary vividness of impressions directly religious, and the self-jealousy with which he watched the cares and distractions of the world, which might efface them in his first letters. If in a life of ungenial toil, diversified with frequent sorrow, the train of these solemn meditations was broken; if he was led, in the distractions and labours of his course, to cleave more closely to surrounding objects than those early aspirations promised; if, in his cravings after immediate sympathy, he rather sought to perpetuate the social circle which he charmed, than to expatiate in scenes of untried being; his pious feelings were only diverted, not destroyed. The stream glided still, the under current of thought, sometimes breaking out in sallies which strangers did not understand, but always feeding and nourishing the most exquisite sweetness of disposition, and the most unobtrusive proofs of self-denying love.

While Lamb was enjoying habits of the closest intimacy with Coleridge in London, he was introduced by him to a young poet whose name has often been associated with his—Charles Lloyd—the son of a wealthy banker at Birmingham, who had recently cast off the trammels of the Society of Friends, and, smitten with the love of poetry, had become a student at the University of Cambridge. There he had been attached to Coleridge by the fascination of his discourse; and, having been admitted to his regard, was introduced by him to Lamb. Lloyd was endeared both to Lamb and Coleridge by a very amiable disposition and a pensive cast of thought; but his intellect bore little resemblance to that of either. He wrote, indeed, pleasing verses and with great facility—a facility fatal to excellence; but his mind was chiefly remarkable for the fine power of analysis which distinguishes his "London," and other of his later compositions. In this power of discriminating and distinguishing, carried to a pitch almost of painfulness, Lloyd has scarcely been equalled; and his poems, though rugged in point of versification, will be found, by those who will read them with the calm attention they require, replete with critical and moral suggestions of the high-

est value. He and Coleridge were devoted wholly to literary pursuits; while Lamb's days were given to accounts, and only at snatches of time was he able to cultivate the faculty of which the society of Coleridge had made him imperfectly conscious.

Lamb's first compositions were in verse, produced slowly, at long intervals, and with self-distrust which the encouragements of Coleridge could not subdue. With the exception of a sonnet to Mrs. Siddons, whose acting, especially in the character of Lady Randolph, had made a deep impression upon him, they were exclusively personal. The longest and most elaborate is that beautiful piece of blank verse entitled "The Grandame," in which he so affectionately celebrates the virtues of the "antique world" of the aged housekeeper of Mr. Plumer. A youthful passion, which lasted only a few months, and which he afterward attempted to regard lightly as a folly past, inspired a few sonnets of very delicate feeling and exquisite music. On the death of his parents he felt himself called upon by duty to repay to his sister the solicitude with which she had watched over his infancy; and well indeed he performed it! To her, from the age of twenty-one, he devoted his existence; seeking thenceforth no connexion which could interfere with her supremacy in his affections, or impair his ability to sustain and to comfort her.

CHAPTER II.

[1796.]

Letters to Coleridge.

In the year 1796, Coleridge, having married and relinquished his splendid dream of emigration, was resident at Bristol; and Lamb, who had left the Temple, and lived with his father, then sinking into dotage, felt his absence from London bitterly, and sought a correspondence with him as, almost, his only comfort. "In your absence," he writes, in one of the earliest of his letters,* "I feel a stupor which makes me indifferent to the hopes and fears of this life. I sometimes wish to induce a religious turn of mind; but habits

* These and other passages are extracted from letters which are either too personal or not sufficiently interesting for entire publication.

are stubborn things, and my religious fervours are confined to some fleeting moments of occasional solitary devotion. A correspondence opening with you has roused me a little from my lethargy, and made me conscious of existence. Indulge me in it! I will not be very troublesome." And again a few days after: "You are the only correspondent, and, I might add, the only friend I have in the world. I go nowhere, and have no acquaintance. Slow of speech and reserved of manners, no one seeks or cares for my society, and I am left alone. Coleridge, I devoutly wish that fortune, which has made sport with you so long, may play one prank more, throw you into London, or some spot near it, and there snugify you for life. 'Tis a selfish but natural wish for me, cast on life's plain friendless." These appeals, it may well be believed, were not made in vain to one who delighted in the lavish communication of the riches of his own mind even to strangers; but none of the letters of Coleridge to Lamb have been preserved. He had just published his "Religious Musings," and the glittering enthusiasm of its language excited Lamb's pious feelings, almost to a degree of pain. "I dare not," says he of this poem, "criticise it. I like not to select any part where all is excellent. I can only admire and thank you for it, in the name of a lover of true poetry—

> 'Believe thou, oh my soul,
> Life is a vision shadowy of truth;
> And pain, and anguish, and the wormy-grave,
> Shapes of a dream.'

I thank you for these lines, in the name of a necessitarian." To Priestley Lamb repeatedly alludes as to the object of their common admiration. "In reading your Religious Musings," says he, "I have felt a transient superiority over you: I *have* seen Priestley. I love to see his name repeated in your writings; I love and honour him almost profanely."* The same fervor glows in the sectarian piety of the following letter addressed to Coleridge, when fascinated with the idea of a cottage life.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"Coleridge, I feel myself much your debtor for that spirit of confidence and friendship which dictated your last letter. May your soul find peace at last in your cottage life! I only wish

* He probably refers to the following lines in the Religious Musings:—

> "So Priestley, their patriot, and saint, and sage,
> Him, full of years, from his loved native land,
> Statesmen bloodstain'd, and priests idolatrous,
> Drove with vain hate. Calm, pitying, he return'd,
> And mused expectant on those promised years!"

you were *but* settled. Do continue to write to me. I read your letters with my sister, and they gave us both abundance of delight. Especially they please us too, when you talk in a religious strain; not but we are offended occasionally with a certain freedom of expression, a certain air of mysticism, more consonant to the conceits of pagan philosophy than consistent with humility of genuine piety. To instance now in your last letter, you say, 'it is by the press that God hath given finite spirits, both evil and good (I suppose you mean *simply* bad men and good men), a portion as it were of his Omnipresence!' Now, high as the human intellect comparatively will soar, and wide as its influence, malign or salutary, can extend, is there not, Coleridge, a distance between the Divine mind and it which makes such language blasphemy? Again, in your first fine consolatory epistle you say, 'you are a temporary sharer in human misery, that you may be an eternal partaker of the Divine Nature.' What more than this do those men say who are for exalting the man Christ Jesus into the second person of an unknown Trinity, men, whom you or I scruple not to call idolators? Man, full of imperfections, at best, and subject to wants which momentarily remind him of dependance; man, a weak and ignorant being, 'servile' from his birth 'to all the skiey influences,' with eyes sometimes open to discern the right path, but a head generally too dizzy to pursue it; man, in the pride of speculation, forgetting his nature, and hailing in himself the future God, must make the angels laugh. Be not angry with me, Coleridge; I wish not to cavil; I know I cannot *instruct* you; I only wish to *remind* you of that humility which best becometh the Christian character. God in the New Testament (*our best guide*) is represented to us in the kind, condescending, amiable, familiar light of a *parent:* and in my poor mind 'tis best for us so to consider of him, as our *heavenly* father, and our *best friend*, without indulging too bold conceptions of his nature. Let us learn to think humbly of ourselves, and rejoice in the appellation of 'dear children,' 'brethren,' and 'coheirs with Christ of the promises,' seeking to know no further.

"I am not insensible, indeed I am not, of the value of that first letter of yours, and I shall find reason to thank you for it again and again long after that blemish in it is forgotten. It will be a fine lesson of comfort to us whenever we read it; and read it we often shall, Mary and I.

"Accept our loves and best kind wishes for the welfare of yourself, and wife, and little one. Nor let me forget to wish you joy on your birthday so lately past; I thought you had been older. My kind thanks and remembrances to Lloyd.

"God love us all, and may he continue to be the father and the friend of the whole human race!

"C. LAMB.

"Sunday evening."

The next letter, commencing in a similar strain, diverges to literary topics, and especially alludes to "Walton's Angler," a book which Lamb always loved as it were a living friend.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"My dear friend, I am not ignorant that to be a partaker of the Divine Nature is a phrase to be met with in Scripture; I am only apprehensive lest we in these latter days, tinctured (some of us, perhaps, pretty deeply) with mystical notions and the pride of metaphysics, might be apt to affix to such phrases a meaning which the primitive users of them, the simple fisher of Galilee for instance, never intended to convey. With that other part of your apology I am not quite so well satisfied. You seem to me to have been straining your comparing faculties to bring together things infinitely distant and unlike; the feeble, narrow-sphered operations of the human intellect; and the everywhere diffused mind of the Deity, the peerless wisdom of Jehovah. Even the expression appears to me inaccurate—portion of omnipresence—omnipresence is an attribute whose very essence is entireness. How can omnipresence be affirmed of anything in part? But enough of this spirit of disputaciousness. Let us attend to the proper business of human life, and talk a little together respecting our domestic concerns. Do you continue to make me acquainted with what you are doing, and how soon you are likely to be settled once for all?

"Have you seen Bowles's new poem on 'Hope?' What character does it bear? Has he exhausted his stores of tender plaintiveness? or is he the same in this last as in all his former pieces? The duties of the day call me off from this pleasant intercourse with my friend; so for the present adieu. Now for the truant borrowing of a few minutes from business. Have you met with a new poem called the 'Pursuits of Literature?' From the extracts in the 'British Review' I judge it to be a very humorous thing; in particular I remember what I thought a very happy character of Dr. Darwin's poetry. Among all your quaint readings, did you ever light upon 'Walton's Complete Angler?' I asked you the question once before; it breathes the very spirit of innocence, purity, and simplicity of heart; there are many choice, old verses interspersed in it; it would sweeten a man's temper at any time

to read it; it would Christianize every discordant angry passion; pray make yourself acquainted with it.

"When will Southey be delivered of his new epic? Madoc, I think, is to be the name of it, though that is a name not familiar to my ears. What progress do you make in your hymns? What 'Review' are you connected with? if with any, why do you delay to notice White's book? You are justly offended at its profaneness, but surely you have undervalued its *wit*, or you would have been more loud in its praises. Do not you think that in Slender's death and madness there is most exquisite humour mingled with tenderness, that is irresistible, truly Shakspearian? Be more full in your mention of it. Poor fellow, he has (very undeservedly) lost by it; nor do I see that it is likely ever to reimburse him the charge of printing, &c. Give it a lift if you can. I am just now wondering whether you will ever come to town again, Coleridge; 'tis among the things I dare not hope, but can't help wishing. For myself, I can live in the midst of town luxury and superfluity and not long for them; and I can't see why your children might not hereafter do the same. Remember you are not in Arcadia when you are in the west of England, and they may catch infection from the world without visiting the metropolis. But you seem to have set your heart upon this same cottage plan, and God prosper you in the experiment! I am at a loss for more to write about, so 'tis as well that I am arrived at the bottom of my paper.

"God love you, Coleridge; our best loves and tenderest wishes await on you, your Sarah, and your little one.

"C. L."

Having been encouraged by Coleridge to entertain the thought of publishing his verses, he submitted the poem called "The Grandame" to his friend with the following letter:—

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"Monday night.

"Unfurnished at present with any sheet-filling subject, I shall continue my letter gradually and journal-wise. My second thoughts entirely coincide with your thoughts on 'Joan of Arc,' and I can only wonder at my childish judgment which overlooked the first book and could prefer the ninth; not that I was insensible to the soberer beauties of the former, but the latter caught me with its glare of magic; the former, however, left a more pleasing general recollection in my mind. Let me add, the first book was the favourite of my sister; and *I* now, with Joan, often 'think on Domremi and the fields of

Arc.' I must not pass over without acknowledging my obligations to your full and satisfactory account of personifications. I have read it again and again, and it will be a guide to my future taste. Perhaps I had estimated Southey's merits too much by number, weight, and measure. I now agree completely and entirely in your opinion of the genius of Southey. Your own image of melancholy is illustrative of what you teach, and in itself masterly. I conjecture it is disbranched from one of your embryo 'hymns.' When they are mature for birth (were I you) I should print 'em in one separate volume, with 'Religious Musings,' and your part of the 'Joan of Arc.' Birds of the same soaring wing should hold on their flight in company. Once for all (and by renewing the subject you will only renew in me the condemnation of Tantalus), I hope to be able to pay you a visit (if you are then in Bristol) some time in the latter end of August or beginning of September, for a week or fortnight; before that time, office business puts an absolute veto on my coming. Of the blank verses I spoke of, the following lines are the only tolerable complete ones I have written out of not more than one hundred and fifty. That I get on so slowly you may fairly impute to want of practice in composition, when I declare to you that (the few verses which you have seen excepted) I have not written fifty lines since I left school. It may not be amiss to remark that my grandmother (on whom the verses are written) lived housekeeper in a family the fifty or sixty last years of her life; that she was a woman of exemplary piety and goodness; and for many years before her death was terribly afflicted with a cancer in her breast, which she bore with true Christian patience. You may think that I have not kept enough apart the ideas of her heavenly and her earthly master, but recollect I have designedly given in to her own way of feeling; and if she had a failing, 'twas that she respected her master's family too much, not reverenced her Maker too little. The lines begin imperfectly, as I may probably connect 'em if I finish at all; and if I do, Biggs shall print 'em in a more economical way than you yours, for (sonnets and all) they won't make a thousand lines as I propose completing 'em, and the substance must be wiredrawn.

The following letter, written at intervals, will give an insight into Lamb's spirit at this time, in its lighter and gayer moods. It would seem that his acquaintance with the old English dramatists had just commenced with Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"Tuesday evening.

"To your list of illustrative personifications, into which a fine imagination enters, I will take leave to add the following from Beaumont and Fletcher's 'Wife for a Month;' 'tis the conclusion of a description of a seafight:—'The game of *death* was never played so nobly; the meager thief grew wanton in his mischiefs, and his shrunk hollow eyes smiled on his ruins.' There is fancy in these of a lower order, from 'Bonduca:' 'Then did I see these valiant men of Britain, like boding owls, creep into todds of ivy, and hoot their fears to one another nightly.' Not that it is a personification; only it just caught my eye in a little extract-book I keep, which is full of quotations from B. and F. in particular, in which authors I can't help thinking there is a greater richness of poetical fancy than in any one, Shakspeare excepted. Are you acquainted with Massinger? At a hazard I will trouble you with a passage from a play of his called 'A Very Woman.' The lines are spoken by a lover (disguised) to his faithless mistress. You will remark the fine effect of the double endings. You will by your ear distinguish the lines, for I write 'em as prose. 'Not far from where my father lives, *a lady*, a neighbour by, blessed with as great a *beauty* as nature durst bestow without *undoing*, dwelt, and most happily, as I thought then, and blessed the house a thousand times she *dwelt* in. This beauty, in the blossom of my youth, when my first fire knew no adulterate *incense*, nor I no way to flatter but my *fondness;* in all the bravery my friends could *show me*, in all the faith my innocence could *give me*, in the best language my true tongue could *tell me*, and all the broken sighs my sick heart *lend me*, I sued and served; long did I serve this *lady*, long was my travail, long my trade to *win her;* with all the duty of my soul I SERVED HER.' 'Then she must love.' 'She did, but never me: she could not *love me;* she would not love, she hated—more, she *scorned me;* and in so poor and base a way *abused me* for all my services, for all my *bounties*, so bold neglects flung on me.' 'What out of love, and worthy love, I *gave her* (shame to her most unworthy mind), to fools, to girls, to fiddlers and her boys she flung, all in disdain of me.' One more passage strikes my eye from B. and F.'s 'Palamon and Arcite.' One of 'em complains in prison: 'This is all our world; we shall know nothing here but one another; hear nothing but the clock that tells us our woes; the vine shall grow, but we shall never see it,' &c. Is not the last circumstance exquisite? I mean not to lay myself open by saying they exceed Milton, and perhaps Col-

lins, in sublimity. But don't you conceive all poet's, after Shakspeare, yield to 'em in variety of genius? Massinger treads close on their heels; but you are most probably as well acquainted with his writings as your humble servant. My quotations, in that case, will only serve to expose my barrenness of matter. Southey, in simplicity and tenderness, is excelled decidedly only, I think, by Beaumont and F. in his 'Maid's Tragedy,' and some parts of 'Philaster' in particular, and elsewhere, occasionally; and perhaps by Cowper, in his 'Crazy Kate,' and in parts of his translation; such as the speeches of Hecuba and Andromache. I long to know your opinion of that translation. The Odyssey especially is surely very Homeric. What nobler than the appearance of Phœbus at the beginning of the Iliad, the lines ending with 'Dread sounding, bounding on the silver bow!'

"I beg you will give me your opinion of the translation; it afforded me high pleasure. As curious a specimen of translation as ever fell into my hands, is a young man's in our office, of a French novel. What in the original was literally 'amiable delusions of the fancy,' he proposed to render 'the fair frauds of the imagination.' I had much trouble in licking the book into any meaning at all. Yet did the knave clear fifty or sixty pounds by subscription and selling the copyright. The book itself not a week's work! To-day's portion of my journalizing epistle has been very dull and poverty-stricken. I will here end."

"Tuesday night.

"I have been drinking egg hot and smoking Oronooko, (associating circumstances, which ever forcibly recall to my mind our evenings and nights at the Salutation), my eyes and brain are heavy and asleep, but my heart is awake; and if words came as ready as ideas, and ideas as feelings, I could say ten hundred kind things. Coleridge, you know not my supreme happiness at having one on earth (though counties separate us) whom I can call a friend. Remember you those tender lines of Logan?—

'Our broken friendships we deplore,
And loves of youth that are no more;
No after friendships e'er can raise
Th' endearments of our early days,
And ne'er the heart such fondness prove,
As when we first began to love.'

"I am writing at random, and half-tipsy, what you may not *equally* understand, as you will be sober when you read it, but *my* sober and *my* half-tipsy hours you are alike a sharer in. Good-night,

'Then up rose our bard like a prophet in drink,
Craigdoroch, thou'lt soar when creation shall sink.'—BURNS."

"Thursday.

"I am now in high hopes to be able to visit you, if perfectly convenient on your part, by the end of next month—perhaps the last week or fortnight in July. A change of scene and a change of faces would do me good, even if that scene were not to be Bristol, and those faces Coleridge's and his friends'! In the words of Terence, a little altered, 'Tædet me hujus quotidiani *mundi*.' I am heartily sick of the everyday scenes of life. I shall half wish you unmarried (don't show this to Mrs. C.) for one evening only, to have the pleasure of smoking with you, and drinking egg hot in some little smoky room in a pothouse, for I know not yet how I shall like you in a decent room, and looking quite happy. My best love and respects to Sara notwithstanding.

"Yours sincerely,

"CHARLES LAMB."

A proposal by Coleridge to print Lamb's poems with a new edition of his own (an association in which Lloyd was ultimately included) occasioned reciprocal communications of each other's verses, and many questions of small alterations suggested and argued on both sides. I have thought it better to omit much of this verbal criticism, which, not very interesting in itself, is unintelligible without a contemporary reference to the poems which are its subject. The next letter was written on hearing of Coleridge being afflicted with a painful disease.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"My brother, my friend—I am distressed for you, believe me I am; not so much for your painful, troublesome complaint, which, I trust, is only for a time, as for those anxieties which brought it on, and perhaps even now may be nursing its malignity. Tell me, dearest of my friends, is your mind at peace, or has anything, yet unknown to me, happened to give you fresh disquiet, and steal from you all the pleasant dreams of future rest? Are you still (I fear you are) far from being comfortably settled? Would to God it were in my power to contribute towards the bringing of you into the haven where you would be. But you are too well skilled in the philosophy of consolation to need my humble tribute of advice; in pain, and in sickness, and in all manner of disappointments, I trust you have that within you which shall speak peace to your *mind*. Make it, I entreat you, one of your puny comforts that

I feel for you, and share all your griefs with you. I feel as if I were troubling you about *little* things; now I am going to resume the subject of our last two letters, but it may divert us both from unpleasanter feelings to make such matters, in a manner, of importance. Without further apology, then, it was not that I did not relish, that I did not in my heart thank you for those little pictures of your feelings which you lately sent me, if I neglected to mention them. You may remember you had said much the same things before to me on the same subject in a former letter, and I considered those last verses as only the identical thoughts better clothed; either way (in prose or verse), such poetry must be welcome to me. I love them as I love the Confessions of Rousseau, and for the same reason; the same frankness, the same openness of heart, the same disclosure of all the most hidden and delicate affections of the mind: they make me proud to be thus esteemed worthy of the place of friend-confessor, brother-confessor, to a man like Coleridge. This last is, I acknowledge, language too high for friendship; but it is also, I declare, too sincere for flattery. Now, to put on stilts, and talk magnificently about trifles. I condescend, then, to your counsel, Coleridge, and allow my first sonnet (sick to death am I to make mention of my sonnets, and I blush to be so taken up with them, indeed I do), I allow it to run thus, '*Fairy Land*,' &c., &c., as I last wrote it.

* * * * * *

"The fragments I now send you I want printed to get rid of 'em; for, while they stick burlike to my memory, they tempt me to go on with the idle trade of versifying, which I long, most sincerely I speak it, I long to leave off, for it is unprofitable to my soul; I feel it is; and these questions about words and debates about alterations take me off, I am conscious, from the proper business of *my* life. Take my sonnets, once for all, and do not propose any reamendments, or mention them again in any shape to me, I charge you. I blush that my mind can consider them as things of any worth. And, pray, admit or reject these fragments as you like or dislike them, without ceremony. Call 'em sketches, fragments, or what you will, and do not entitle any of my *things* love sonnets, as I told you to call 'em; 'twill only make me look little in my own eyes; for it is a passion of which I retain *nothing:* 'twas a weakness, concerning which I may say, in the words of Petrarch (whose life is now open before me), 'if it drew me out of some vices, it also prevented the growth of many virtues, filling me with the love of the creature rather than the Creator, which is the death of the soul.' Thank God, the folly has left me for ever; not even a review of my

love verses renews one wayward wish in me; and if I am at all solicitous to trim 'em out in their best apparel, it is because they are to make their appearance in good company. Now to my fragments. Lest you have lost my Grandame, she shall be one. 'Tis among the few verses I ever wrote, that to Mary is another, which profit me in the recollection. God love her; may we two never love each other less!

"These, Coleridge, are the few sketches I have thought worth preserving; how will they relish thus detached? Will you reject all or any of them? They are thine, do whatsoever thou listeth with them. My eyes ache with writing long and late, and I wax wondrous sleepy. God bless you and yours, me and mine. Good-night.

"C. LAMB.

"I will keep my eyes open reluctantly a minute longer to tell you that I love you for those simple, tender, heart-flowing lines with which you conclude your last, and, in my eye, best sonnet (so you call 'em), 'So, for the mother's sake, the child was dear, and dearer was the mother for the child.' Cultivate simplicity, Coleridge, or rather, I should say, banish elaborateness; for simplicity springs spontaneous from the heart, and carries into daylight with its own modest buds, and genuine, sweet, and clear flowers of expression. I allow no hotbeds in the garden of Parnassus. I am unwilling to go to bed and leave my sheet unfilled (a good piece of night work for an idle body like me), so will finish by begging you to send me the earliest account of your complaint, its progress, or (as I hope to God you will be able to send me) the tale of your recovery, or at least amendment. My tenderest remembrances to your Sara.

"Once more good-night."

A wish to dedicate his portion of the volume to his sister gave occasion to the following touching letter:—

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"Coleridge, I love you for dedicating your poetry to Bowles: Genius of the sacred fountain of tears, it was he who led you gently by the hand through all this valley of weeping, showed you the dark green yew-trees and the willow shades where, by the fall of waters, you might indulge an uncomplaining melancholy, a delicious regret for the past, or weave fine visions of that awful future, 'when all the vanities of life's brief day oblivion's hurrying hand hath swept away, and all its sorrows at the awful blast of the archangel's trump are but as shadows past.' I have another sort of dedication in my head

for my few things, which I want to know if you approve of, and can insert. I mean to inscribe them to my sister. It will be unexpected, and it will give her pleasure; or do you think it will look whimsical at all? As I have not spoken to her about it, I can easily reject the idea. But there is a monotony in the affections, which people living together, or, as we do now, very frequently seeing each other, are apt to give into; a sort of indifference in the expression of kindness for each other, which demands that we should sometimes call to our aid the trickery of surprise. Do you publish with Lloyd, or without him? in either case my little portion may come last, and, after the fashion of orders to a country correspondent, I will give directions how I should like to have 'em done. The title-page to stand thus:—

POEMS,

BY

CHARLES LAMB, OF THE INDIA-HOUSE.

"Under this title the following motto, which, for want of room, I put over leaf, and desire you to insert whether you like it or no. May not a gentleman choose what arms, mottoes, or armorial bearings the herald will give him leave, without consulting his republican friend, who might advise none? May not a publican put up the sign of the Saracen's Head, even though his undiscerning neighbour should prefer, as more genteel, the Cat and Gridiron?

"This beauty, in the blossom of my youth,
When my first fire knew no adult'rate incense,
Nor I no way to flatter but my fondness,
In the best language my true tongue could tell me,
And all the broken sighs my sick heart lend me,
I sued and served. Long did I love this lady.'"—*Massinger.*

THE DEDICATION.

THE FEW FOLLOWING POEMS,
CREATURES OF THE FANCY AND THE FEELING
IN LIFE'S MORE VACANT HOURS,
PRODUCED, FOR THE MOST PART, BY
LOVE IN IDLENESS,
ARE,
WITH ALL A BROTHER'S FONDNESS,
INSCRIBED TO
MARY ANN LAMB,
THE AUTHOR'S BEST FRIEND AND SISTER.

"This is the pomp and paraphernalia of parting, with which I take my leave of a passion which has reigned so royally (so long) within me; thus, with its trappings of leaureateship, I fling it off, pleased and satisfied with myself that the weakness troubles me no longer. I am wedded, Coleridge, to the fortunes of my sister and my poor old father. Oh! my friend, I think sometimes could I recall the days that are past, which among them should I choose? not those 'merrier days,' not the 'pleasant days of hope,' not 'those wanderings with a fair-hair'd maid,' which I have so often and so feelingly regretted, but the days, Coleridge, of a *mother's* fondness for her *schoolboy*. What would I give to call her back to earth for *one* day, on my knees to ask her pardon for all those little asperities of temper which, from time to time, have given her gentle spirit pain? and the day, my friend, I trust, will come, there will be 'time enough' for kind offices of love, if 'Heaven's eternal year' be ours. Hereafter her meek spirit shall not reproach me. Oh, my friend, cultivate the filial feelings! and let no man think himself released from the kind 'charities' of relationship; these shall give him peace at the last; these are the best foundation for every species of benevolence. I rejoice to hear, by certain channels, that you, my friend, are reconciled with all your relations. 'Tis the most kindly and natural species of love, and we have all the associated train of early feelings to secure its strength and perpetuity. Send me an account of your health; *indeed* I am solicitous about you. God love you and yours.

"C. LAMB."

The following, written about this time, alludes to some desponding expression in a letter which is lost, and which Coleridge had combated.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"I had put my letter into the post rather hastily, not expecting to have to acknowledge another from you so soon. This morning's present has made me alive again: my last night's epistle was childishly querulous; but you have put a little life into me, and I will thank you for your remembrance of me while my sense of it is yet warm; for if I linger a day or two I may use the same phrase of acknowledgment, or similar, but the feeling that dictates it now will be gone. I shall send you a *caput mortuum*, not a *cor vivens*. Thy Watchman's, thy bellman's verses I do retort upon thee, thou libellous varlet; why you cried the hours yourself, and who made you so proud? But I submit, to show my humility,

most implicitly to your dogmas. I reject entirely the copy of verses you reject. With regard to my leaving off versifying you have said so many pretty things, so many fine compliments, ingeniously decked out in the garb of sincerity, and undoubtedly springing from a present feeling somewhat like sincerity, that you might melt the most un-muse-ical soul—did you not (now for a Rowland compliment for your profusion of Olivers), did you not, in your very epistle, by the many pretty fancies and profusion of heart displayed in it, dissuade and discourage me from attempting anything after you? At present I have not leisure to make verses, nor anything approaching to a fondness for the exercise. In the ignorant present time, who can answer for the future man? 'At lovers' perjuries Jove laughes'—and poets have sometimes a disingenuous way of forswearing their occupation. This, though, is not my case. Publish your Burns when and how you like, it will be new to me; my memory of it is very confused, and tainted with unpleasant associations. Burns was the god of my idolatry, as Bowles of yours. I am jealous of your fraternizing with Bowles, when I think you relish him more than Burns, or my old favourite, Cowper. But you conciliate matters when you talk of the 'divine chitchat' of the latter: by the expression, I see you thoroughly relish him. I love Mrs. Coleridge for her excuses a hundred fold more dearly than if she heaped 'line upon line,' out Hannah-ing Hannah More; and had rather hear you sing 'Did a very little baby' by your family fireside, than listen to you, when you were repeating one of Bowles's sweetest sonnets, in your sweet manner, while we two were indulging sympathy, a solitary luxury, by the fireside at the Salutation. Yet have I no higher ideas of heaven. Your company was one 'cordial in this melancholy vale;' the remembrance of it is a blessing partly, and partly a curse. When I can abstract myself from things present, I can enjoy it with a freshness of relish; but it more constantly operates to an unfavourable comparison with the uninteresting converse I always and *only* can partake in. Not a soul loves Bowles here: scarce one has heard of Burns; few but laugh at me for reading my Testament; they talk a language I understand not; I conceal sentiments that would be a puzzle to them. I can only converse with you by letter, and with the dead in their books. My sister, indeed, is all I can wish in a companion; but our spirits are alike poorly; our reading and knowledge from the selfsame sources; our communication with the scenes of the world alike narrow; never having kept separate company, or any 'company' *together;* never having read separate books, and few books *together*, what knowledge

have we to convey to each other? In our little range of duties and connexions, how few sentiments can take place, without friends, with few books, with a taste for religion rather than a strong religious habit! We need some support, some leading-strings to cheer and direct us; you talk very wisely, and be not sparing of *your advice*. Continue to remember us, and to show us you do remember us: we will take as lively an interest in what concerns you and yours. All I can add to your happiness will be sympathy: you can add to mine *more*; you can teach me wisdom. I am indeed an unreasonable correspondent; but I was unwilling to let my last night's letter go off without this qualifier: you will perceive by this my mind is easier, and you will rejoice. I do not expect or wish you to write till you are moved; and, of course, shall not, till you announce to me that event, think of writing myself. Love to Mrs. Coleridge and David Hartley, and my kind remembrance to Lloyd if he is with you. "C. LAMB.

"I will get 'Nature and Art;' have not seen it yet, nor any of Jeremy Taylor's works."

CHAPTER III.

[1797.]

Letters to Coleridge.

THE volume which was to combine the early poetry of the three friends was not completed in the year 1796, and proceeded slowly through the press in the following year; Lamb occasionally submitting an additional sonnet or correction of one already sent to the judgment of Coleridge, and filling long letters with minute suggestions on Coleridge's share of the work, and high but honest expressions of praise of particular images and thoughts. The eulogy is only interesting as indicative of the reverential feeling with which Lamb regarded the genius of Coleridge; but one or two specimens of the gentle rebuke which he ventured on, when the gorgeousness of Coleridge's language seemed to oppress his sense, are worthy of preservation. The following relates to a line in the noble Ode on the Departing Year, in which Coleridge had written of

"Th' ethereal multitude,
Whose purple locks with snow-white glories shone."

"'Purple locks and snow-white glories!' these are things the muse talks about when, to borrow H. Walpole's witty phrase, she is not finely phrensied, or a little lightheaded, that's all—'Purple locks!' They may manage those things differently in fairy land; but your 'golden tresses' are to my fancy."

On this remonstrance Coleridge changed the "purple" into "golden," defending his original epithet; and Lamb thus gave up the point:—

"'Golden locks and snow-white glories' are as incongruous as your former; and if the great Italian painters, of whom my friend knows about as much as the man in the moon, if these great gentleman be on your side, I see no harm in your retaining the purple. The glories that *I* have observed to encircle the heads of saints and madonas in those old paintings have been mostly of a dirty drab-coloured yellow—a dull gambogian. Keep your old line; it will excite a confused kind of pleasurable idea in the reader's mind, not clear enough to be called a conception, nor just enough, I think, to reduce to painting. It is a rich line, you say; and riches hide many faults." And the word "wreathed" was ultimately adopted instead of purple or golden: but the snow-white glories remain.

Not satisfied with the dedication of his portion of the volume to his sister, and the sonnet which had been sent to the press, Lamb urged on Coleridge the insertion of another, which seems to have been ultimately withheld as too poor in poetical merit for publication. The rejected sonnet, and the references made to it by the writer, have an interest now beyond what mere fancy can give. After various critical remarks on an ode of Coleridge, he thus introduced the subject:—

"If the fraternal sentiment conveyed in the following lines will atone for the total want of anything like merit or genius in it, I desire you will print it next after my sonnet to my sister.

Friend of my earliest years and childish days,
My joys, my sorrows, thou with me hast shared,
Companion dear; and we alike have fared,
Poor pilgrims we, through life's unequal ways.
It were unwisely done, should we refuse
To cheer our path, as featly as we may,
Our lonely path to cheer, as travellers use
With merry song, quaint tale, or roundelay.
And we will sometimes talk past troubles o'er,
Of mercies shown, and all our sickness heal'd,
And in his judgments God rememb'ring love:
And we will learn to praise God evermore,
For those 'glad tidings of great joy,' revealed
By that sooth messenger sent from above.

1797.

"This has been a sad long letter of business, with no room in it for what honest Bunyan terms heart-work. I have just room left to congratulate you on your removal to Stowey; to wish success to all your projects; to 'bid fair peace' be to that house; to send my love and best wishes, breathed warmly, after your dear Sara and her little David Hartley. If Lloyd be with you, bid him write to me; I feel to whom I am obliged primarily for two very friendly letters I have received already from him. A dainty sweet book that 'Nature and Art' is. I am at present re-rereading Priestley's Examination of the Scotch Doctors; how the rogue strings 'em up! three together. You have no doubt read that clear, strong, humorous, most entertaining peace of reasoning? If not, procure it, and be exquisitely amused. I wish I could get more of Priestley's works. Can you recommend me to any more books, easy of access, such as circulating shops afford? God bless you and yours.

"Mondy morning, at office.

"Poor Mary is very unwell with a sore throat and a slight species of scarlet fever. God bless her too."

He recurs to the subject in his next letter, which is also interesting as urging Coleridge to attempt some great poem worthy of his genius.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"I need not repeat my wishes to have my little sonnets printed *verbatim* my last way. In particular, I fear lest you should prefer printing my first sonnet, as you have done more than once, 'did the wand of Merlin wave,' it looks so like Mr. Merlin, the ingenious successor of the immortal Merlin, now living in good health and spirits, and flourishing in magical reputation, in Oxford-street; and, on my life, one half who read it would understand it so. Do put 'em forth finally, as I have, in various letters, settled it; for first a man's self is to be pleased, and then his friends, and, of course, the greater number of his friends, if they differ *inter se*. Thus taste may safely be put to the vote. I do long to see our names together; not for vanity's sake, and naughty pride of heart altogether, for not a living soul I know, or am intimate with, will scarce read the book; so I shall gain nothing, *quoad famam;* and yet there is a little vanity mixes in it, I cannot help denying. I am aware of the unpoetical cast of the six last lines of my last sonnet, and think myself unwarranted in smuggling so tame a thing into the book; only the sentiments of those six

lines are thoroughly congenial to me in my state of mind, and I wish to accumulate perpetuating tokens of my affection to poor Mary; that it has no originality in its cast, nor anything in the feelings, but what is common and natural to thousands, nor ought properly to be called poetry, I see; still it will tend to keep present to my mind a view of things which I ought to indulge. These six lines, too, have not, to a reader, a connectedness with the foregoing. Omit it if you like. What a treasure it is to my poor, indolent, and unemployed mind thus to lay hold on a subject to talk about, though 'tis but a sonnet, and that of the lowest order! How mournfully inactive I am! 'Tis night; good-night.

"My sister, I thank God, is nigh recovered: she was seriously ill. Do, in your next letter, and that right soon, give me some satisfaction respecting your present situation at Stowey. Is it a farm you have got? and what does your worship know about farming?

"Coleridge, I want you to write an epic poem. Nothing short of it can satisfy the vast capacity of true poetic genius. Having one great end to direct all your poetical faculties to, and on which to lay out your hopes, your ambition will show you to what you are equal. By the sacred energies of Milton! by the dainty, sweet, and soothing phantasies of honey-tongued Spenser! I adjure you to attempt the epic. Or do something more ample than the writing an occasional brief ode or sonnet; something 'to make yourself for ever known—to make the age to come your own.' But I prate; doubtless you meditate something. When you are exalted among the lords of epic fame, I shall recall with pleasure, and exultingly, the days of your humility, when you disdained not to put forth, in the same volume with mine, your 'Religious Musings,' and that other poem from the 'Joan of Arc,' those promising first-fruits of high renown to come. You have learning, you have fancy, you have enthusiasm, you have strength, and amplitude of wing enow for flights like those I recommend. In the vast and unexplored regions of fairy-land there is ground enough unfound and uncultivated; search these, and realize your favourite Susquehannah scheme. In all our comparisons of taste, I do not know whether I have ever heard your opinion of a poet very dear to me—the now-out-of-fashion Cowley. Favour me with your judgment of him, and tell me if his prose essays, in particular, as well as no inconsiderable part of his verse, be not delicious. I prefer the graceful rambling of his essays even to the courtly elegance and ease of Addison; abstracting from this the latter's exquisite humour.

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"When the little volume is printed, send me three or four, at all events not more than six copies, and tell me if I put you to any additional expense by printing with you. I have no thought of the kind, and in that case must reimburse you."

In the commencement of this year Coleridge removed from Bristol to a cottage at Nether Stowey, to imbody his favourite dream of a cottage life. This change of place probably delayed the printing of the volume; and Coleridge, busy with a thousand speculations, became irregular in replying to the letters with writing which Lamb solaced his dreary hours. The following are the most interesting portions of the only letters which remain of this year.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"Priestley, whom I sin in almost adoring, speaks of 'such a choice of company as tends to keep up that right bent and firmness of mind which a necessary intercourse with the world would otherwise warp and relax.' 'Such fellowship is the true balsam of life; its cement is infinitely more durable than that of the friendships of the world, and it looks for its proper fruit and complete gratification to the life beyond the grave.' Is there a possible chance for such a one as I to realize in this world such friendships! Where am I to look for 'em? What testimonials shall I bring of my being worthy of such friendship? Alas! the great and good go together in separate herds, and leave such as I to lag far, far behind in all intellectual, and, far more grievous to say, in all moral accomplishments. Coleridge, I have not one truly elevated character among my acquaintance; not one Christian; not one, but undervalues Christianity—singly what am I to do? Wesley (have you read his life?), was he not an elevated character? Wesley has said, 'Religion is not a solitary thing.' Alas! it necessarily is so with me, or next to solitary. 'Tis true you write to me. But correspondence by letter and personal intimacy are very widely different. Do, do write to me, and do some good to my mind, already how much 'warped and relaxed' by the world! 'Tis the conclusion of another evening. Good-night. God have us all in his keeping.

"If you are sufficiently at leisure, oblige me with an account of your plan of life at Stowey; your literary occupations and prospects; in short, make me acquainted with every circumstance which, as relating to you, can be interesting to me. Are you yet a Berkleyan? Make me one. I rejoice in being, speculatively, a necessitarian. Would to God I were habitually a practical one. Confirm me in the faith of that great

and glorious doctrine, and keep me steady in the contemplation of it. You some time since expressed an intention you had of finishing some extensive work on the Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion. Have you let that intention go? or are you doing anything towards it? Make to yourself other ten talents. My letter is full of nothingness. I talk of nothing. But I must talk. I love to write to you. I take pride in it. It makes me think less meanly of myself. It makes me think myself not totally disconnected from the better part of mankind. I know I am too dissatisfied with the beings around me; but I cannot help occasionally exclaiming, 'Wo is me, that I am constrained to dwell with Meshech, and to have my habitation among the tents of Kedar.' I know I am in noways better in practice than my neighbours, but I have a taste for religion, an occasional earnest aspiration after perfection, which they have not. I gain nothing by being with such as myself; we encourage one another in mediocrity. I am always longing to be with men more excellent than myself. All this must sound odd to you, but these are my predominant feelings when I sit down to write to you, and I should put force upon my mind were I to reject them. Yet I rejoice, and feel my privilege with gratitude, when I have been reading some wise book, such as I have just been reading, 'Priestley on Philosophical Necessity,' in the thought that I enjoy a kind of communion, a kind of friendship even with the great and good. Books are to me instead of friends. I wish they did not resemble the latter in their scarceness.

"And how does little David Hartley? '*Ecquid in antiquam virtutem?*' Does his mighty name work wonders yet upon his little frame and opening mind? I did not distinctly understand you; you don't mean to make an actual ploughman of him? Is Lloyd with you yet? Are you intimate with Southey? What poems is he about to publish? he hath a most prolific brain, and is indeed a most sweet poet. But how can you answer all the various mass of interrogation I have put to you in the course of the sheet? Write back just what you like, only write something, however brief. I have now nigh finished my page, and got to the end of another evening (Monday evening), and my eyes are heavy and sleepy, and my brain unsuggestive. I have just heart enough awake to say good-night once more, and God love you, my dear friend, God love us all. Mary bears an affectionate remembrance of you.

"CHARLES LAMB."

A poem of Coleridge, emulous of Southey's "Joan of Arc," which he proposed to call the "Maid of Orleans," on which

Lamb had made some critical remarks, produced the humorous recantation with which the following letter opens.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"Your poem is altogether admirable; parts of it are even exquisite. I perceived all its excellences, on a first reading, as readily as now you have been removing a supposed film from my eyes. I was only struck with a certain faulty disproportion, in the matter and the *style*, which I still think I perceive, between these lines and the former ones. I had an end in view; I wished to make you reject the poem, only as being discordant with the other, and, in subservience to that end, it was politically done in me to overpass and make no mention of merit, which, could you think me capable of *overlooking*, might reasonably damn for ever in your judgment all pretensions in me to be critical. There, I will be judged by Lloyd whether I have not made a very handsome recantation. I was in the case of a man whose friend has asked him his opinion of a certain young lady; the deluded wight gives judgment against her in *toto;* don't like her face, her walk, her manners; finds fault with her eyebrows; can't see no wit in her; his friend looks blank, he begins to smell a rat; wind veers about; he acknowledges her good sense, her judgment in dress, a certain simplicity in manners and honesty of heart; something, too, in her manners which gains upon you after a short acquaintance; and then her accurate pronunciation of the French language, and a pretty uncultivated taste in drawing. The reconciled gentleman smiles applause, squeezes him by the hand, and hopes he will do him the honour of taking a bit of dinner with Mrs. —— and him—a plain family dinner—some day next week; 'for, I suppose, you never heard we were married. I'm glad to see you like my wife, however; you'll come and see her, ha?' Now, am I too proud to retract entirely? Yet I do perceive I am in some sort straitened; you are manifestly wedded to this poem, and what fancy has joined let no man separate. I turn me to the Joan of Arc, second book.

"The solemn openings of it are with sounds, which Ll. would say 'are silence to the mind.' The deep preluding strains are fitted to initiate the mind, with a pleasing awe, into the sublimest mysteries of theory concerning man's nature, and his noblest destination; the philosophy of a first cause; of subordinate agents in creation, superior to man; the subserviency of pagan worship and pagan faith to the introduction of a purer and more perfect religion, which you so elegantly describe as winning, with gradual steps, her difficult

way northward from Bethabra. After all this cometh Joan, a *publican's* daughter, sitting on an alehouse *bench* and marking the *swingings* of the *signboard*, finding a poor man, his wife, and six children starved to death with cold, and thence roused into a state of mind proper to receive visions, emblematical of equality; which, what the devil Joan had to do with, I don't know, or, indeed, with the French and American revolutions, though that needs no pardon, it is executed so nobly. After all, if you perceive no disproportion, all argument is vain: I do not so much object to parts. Again, when you talk of building your fame on these lines in preference to the 'Religious Musings,' I cannot help conceiving of you and of the author of that as two different persons, and I think you a very vain man.

"I have been rereading your letter; much of it I *could* dispute, but with the latter part of it, in which you compare the two Joans, with respect to their predispositions for fanaticism, I, *toto corde*, coincide with, only I think that Southey's strength rather lies in the description of the emotions of the Maid under the weight of inspiration; these (I see no mighty difference between *her* describing them or *you* describing them), these if you only equal, the previous admirers of his poems, as is natural, will prefer his; if you surpass, prejudice will scarcely allow it, and I scarce think you will surpass, though your specimen at the conclusion, I am in earnest, I think very nigh equals them; and in an account of a fanatic or of a prophet, the description of her *emotions* is expected to be most highly finished. By-the-way, I spoke far too disparagingly of your lines, and, I am ashamed to say, purposely. I should like you to specify or particularize; the story of the 'Tottering Eld,' of 'his eventful years all come and gone,' is too general; why not make him a soldier, or some character, however, in which he has been witness to frequency of 'cruel wrong and strange distress?' I think I should. When I laughed at the 'miserable man crawling from beneath the coverture,' I wonder I did not perceive that it was a laugh of horror, such as I have laughed at Dante's picture of the famished Ugolino. Without falsehood, I perceive a hundred beauties in your narrative. Yet I wonder you do not perceive something out of the way, something unsimple and artificial in the expression 'voiced a sad tale.' I hate made-dishes at the muses' banquet. I believe I was wrong in most of my other objections. But surely 'hailed him immortal' adds nothing to the terror of the man's death, which it was your business to heighten, not diminish by a phrase, which takes away all terror from it. I like that line, 'They closed their eyes in sleep, nor knew 'twas death.'

Indeed, there is scarcely a line I do not like. '*Turbid* ecstasy' is surely not so good as what you *had* written, 'troublous.' Turbid rather suits the muddy kind of inspiration which London porter confers. The versification is, throughout, to my ears, unexceptionable, with no disparagement to the measure of the 'Religious Musings,' which is exactly fitted to the thoughts.

"You were building your house on a rock when you rested your fame on that poem. I can scarce bring myself to believe that I am admitted to a familiar correspondence, and all the license of friendship, with a man who writes blank verse like Milton. Now, this is delicate flattery, *indirect* flattery. Go on with your 'Maid of Orleans,' and be content to be second to yourself. I shall become a convert to it when 'tis finished."

* * * * * *

"This afternoon I attend the funeral of my poor old aunt, who died on Thursday. I own I am thankful that the good creature has ended all her days of suffering and infirmity. She was to me the 'cherisher of infancy,' and one must fall on those occasions into reflections, which it would be commonplace to enumerate, concerning death, 'of chance and change, and fate and human life.' Good God, who could have foreseen all this but four months back! I had reckoned, in particular, on my aunt's living many years; she was a very hearty old woman. But she was a mere skeleton before she died, looked more like a corpse that had lain weeks in the grave, than one fresh dead. 'Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun; but let a man live many days and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many.' Coleridge, why are we to live on after all the strength and beauty of existence are gone, when all the life of life is fled, as Burns expresses it? Tell Lloyd I have had thoughts of turning Quaker; have been reading, or am rather just beginning to read, a most capital book, good thoughts in good language, William Penn's 'No Cross, No Crown.' I like it immensely. Unluckily, I went to one of his meetings, tell him, in St. John's-street, yesterday, and saw a man under all the agitations and workings of a fanatic, who believed himself under the influence of some 'inevitable presence.' This cured me of Quakerism; I love it in the books of Penn and Woolman, but I detest the vanity of a man thinking he speaks by the Spirit, when what he says an ordinary man might say without all that quaking and trembling. In the midst of his inspiration, and the effects of it were most noisy, was handed

into the midst of the meeting a most terrible blackguard Wapping sailor; the poor man, I believe, had rather have been in the hottest part of an engagement, for the congregation of broad brims, together with the ravings of the prophet, were too much for his gravity, though I saw even he had delicacy enough not to laugh out. And the inspired gentleman, though his manner was so supernatural, yet neither talked nor professed to talk anything more than good sober sense, common morality, with now and then a declaration of not speaking from himself. Among other things, looking back to his childhood and early youth, he told the meeting what a graceless young dog he had been, that in his youth he had a good share of wit; reader, if thou hadst seen the gentleman, thou wouldst have sworn that it must indeed have been many years ago, for his rueful physiognomy would have scared away the playful goddess from the meeting where he presided for ever. A wit! a wit! what could he mean? Lloyd, it minded me of Falkland in the rivals, 'Am I full of wit and humour? No, indeed you are not. Am I the life and soul of every company I come into? No, it cannot be said you are.' That hard-faced gentleman, a wit! Why Nature wrote on his fanatic forehead fifty years ago, 'Wit never comes that comes to all.' I should be as scandalized at a *bon mot* issuing from his oracle-looking mouth, as to see Cato go down a country-dance. God love you all. You are very good to submit to be pleased with reading my nothings. 'Tis the privilege of friendship to talk nonsense, and to have nonsense respected. Yours ever,

"C. LAMB.

"Monday."

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"Your last letter was dated the 10th February; in it you promised to write again the next day. At least, I did not expect so long, so unfriend-like a silence. There was a time, Col., when a remissness of this sort in a dear friend would have lain very heavy on my mind; but latterly I have been too familiar with neglect to feel much from the semblance of it. Yet, to suspect one's self overlooked, and in the way to oblivion, is a feeling rather humbling; perhaps, as tending to self-mortification, not unfavourable to the spiritual state. Still, as you meant to confer no benefit on the soul of your friend, you do not stand quite clear from the imputation of unkindliness (a word by which I mean the diminutive of unkindness). And then David Hartley was unwell; and how is the small philosopher, the minute philosopher? and David's mother? Coleridge, I am not trifling, nor are these matter-of-fact ques-

tions only. You are all very dear and precious to me; do what you will, Col., you may hurt me and vex me by your silence, but you cannot estrange my heart from you all. I cannot scatter friendships like chuck farthings, nor let them drop from mine hand like hourglass-sand. I have but two or three people in the world to whom I am more than indifferent, and I can't afford to whistle them off to the winds.

"My sister has recovered from her illness. May that merciful God make tender my heart, and make me as thankful as in my distress I was earnest in my prayers. Congratulate me on an ever-present and never-alienable friend like her. And do, do insert, if you have not *lost*, my dedication. It will have lost its value by coming so late. If you are really going on with that volume, I shall be enabled in a day or two to send you a short poem to insert. Now, do answer this Friendship, and acts of friendship, should be reciprocal, and free as the air; a friend should never be reduced to beg an alms of his fellow. Yet I will beg an alms; I entreat you to write, and tell me all about poor L. L., and all of you.

"God love and preserve you all.

"C. LAMB."

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"I stared with wild wonderment to see thy well-known hand again. It revived many a pleasing recollection of an epistolary intercourse, of late strangely suspended, once the pride of my life. Before I even opened thy letter, I figured to myself a sort of complacency which my little hoard at home would feel at receiving the new-comer into the little drawer, where I keep my treasures of this kind. You have done well in writing to me. The little room (was it not a little one?) at the Salutation was already in the way of becoming a fading idea; it had begun to be classed in my memory with those 'wanderings with a fair-hair'd maid,' in the recollection of which I feel I have no property. You press me, very kindly do you press me, to come to Stowey; obstacles strong as death prevent me at present; maybe I may be able to come before the year is out; believe me, I will come as soon as I can, but I dread naming a probable time. It depends on fifty things, besides the expense, which is not nothing. As to ——, caprice may grant what caprice only refused, and it is no more hardship, rightly considered, to be dependant on him for pleasure, than to lie at the mercy of the rain and sunshine for the enjoyment of a holyday; in either case we are not to look for a suspension of the laws of nature. 'Grill will be grill.' Vide Spenser.

"I could not but smile at the compromise you make with me for printing Lloyd's poems first, but there is in nature, I fear, too many tendencies to envy and jealousy not to justify you in your apology. Yet, if any one is welcome to pre-eminence from me, it is Lloyd, for he would be the last to desire it. So pray let his name *uniformly* precede mine, for it would be treating me like a child to suppose it could give me pain. Yet, alas! I am not insusceptible of the bad passions. Thank God, I have the ingenuousness to be ashamed of them. I am dearly fond of Charles Lloyd; he is all goodness, and I have too much of the world in my composition to feel myself thoroughly deserving of his friendship.

"Lloyd tells me that Sheridan put you upon writing your tragedy. I hope you are only Coleridgeizing when you talk of finishing it in a few days. Shakspeare was a more modest man, but you best know your own power.

"Of my last poem you speak slightingly; surely the longer stanzas were pretty tolerable; at least there was one good line in it.

'Thick-shaded trees, with dark green leaf rich clad.'

"To adopt your own expression, I call this a 'rich' line, a fine full line. And some others I thought even beautiful. Believe me, my litte gentleman will feel some repugnance at riding behind in the basket, though, I confess, in pretty good company. Your picture of idiocy, with the sugar-loaf head, is exquisite; but are you not too severe upon our more favoured brethren in fatuity? I send you a trifling letter; but you have only to think that I have been skimming the superfices of my mind, and found it only froth. Now, do write again; you cannot believe how I long and love always to hear about you.

"Yours most affectionately,

"CHARLES LAMB.

"Monday night."

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"Did you seize the grand opportunity of seeing Kosciusko while he was at Bristol? I never saw a hero, I wonder how they look. I have been reading a most curious romance-like work, called the Life of John Buncle, Esq. 'Tis very interesting, and an extraordinary compound of all manner of subjects, from the depth of the ludicrous to the heights of sublime religious truth. There is much abstruse science in it above my cut, and an infinite fund of pleasantry. John Buncle is a famous fine man, formed in nature's most eccentric hour. I

am ashamed of what I write. But I have no topic to talk of. I see nobody, and sit, and read, or walk alone, and hear nothing. I am quite lost to conversation from disuse; and out of the sphere of my little family, who, I am thankful, are dearer and dearer to me every day, I see no face that brightens up at my approach. My friends are at a distance (meaning Birmingham and Stowey); worldly hopes are at a low ebb with me, and unworldly thoughts are not yet familiarized to me, though I occasionally indulge in them. Still I feel a calm not unlike content. I think it is sometimes more akin to physical stupidity than to a heaven-flowing serenity and peace. What right have I to obtrude all this upon you? and what is such a letter to you? and, if I come to Stowey, what conversation can I furnish to compensate my friend for those stores of knowledge and of fancy; those delightful treasures of wisdom, which, I know, he will open to me? But it is better to give than to receive; and I was a very patient hearer and docile scholar in our winter evenings at Mr. May's; was I not, Col.? What I have owed to thee, my heart can ne'er forget.

"God love you and yours.

"C. L.

"Saturday."

At length the small volume containing the poems of Coleridge, Lloyd, and Lamb, was published by Mr. Cottle at Bristol. It excited little attention; but Lamb had the pleasure of seeing his dedication to his sister printed in good set form, after his own fashion, and of beholding the delight and pride with which she received it. This little book, now very scarce, had the following motto expressive of Coleridge's feeling towards his associates:—*Duplex nobis vinculum, et amicitiæ et similium junctarumque Camænarum; quod utinam neque mors solvat, neque temporis longinquitas.* Lamb's share of the work consists of eight sonnets; four short fragments of blank verse, of which the Grandame is the principal; a poem, called the Tomb of Douglas; some verses to Charles Lloyd; and a Vision of Repentance; which are all published in the last edition of his poetical works, except one of the sonnets, which was addressed to Mrs. Siddons; and the Tomb of Douglas, which was justly omitted as commonplace and vapid. They only occupy twenty-eight duodecimo pages, within which space was comprised all that Lamb at this time had written which he deemed worth preserving.

The following letter from Lamb to Coleridge seems to have been written on receiving the first copy of the work.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"I am sorry I cannot now relish your poetical present so thoroughly as I feel it deserves; but I do not the less thank Lloyd and you for it.

"Before I offer, what alone I have to offer, a few obvious remarks on the poems you sent me, I can but notice the odd coincidence of two young men, in one age, carolling their grandmothers. Love, what L. calls the 'feverish and romantic tie,' hath too long domineered over all the charities of home: the dear domestic ties of father, brother, husband. The amiable and benevolent Cowper has a beautiful passage in his 'Task'—some natural and painful reflections on his deceased parents; and Hayley's sweet lines to his mother are notoriously the best things he ever wrote. Cowper's lines, some of them are

> 'How gladly would the man recall to life
> The boy's neglected sire; a mother too!
> That softer name, perhaps more gladly still,
> Might he demand them at the gates of death.'

"I cannot but smile to see my granny so gayly decked forth; though I think whoever altered 'thy' praises to 'her' praises, 'thy honoured memory to 'her' honoured memory, did wrong—they best expressed my feelings. There is a pensive state of recollection, in which the mind is disposed to apostrophize the departed objects of its attachment; and, breaking loose from grammatical precision, changes from the first to the third, and from the third to the first person, just as the random fancy or the feeling directs. Among Lloyd's sonnets, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 11th are eminently beautiful. I think him too lavish of his expletives; the *dos* and *dids*, when they occur too often, bring a quaintness with them along with their simplicity, or rather air of antiquity, which the patrons of them seem desirous of conveying.

* * * * *

"Another time I may notice more particularly Lloyd's, Southey's, Dermody's Sonnets. I shrink from them now; my teazing lot makes me too confused for a clear judgment of things, too selfish for sympathy; and these ill-digested, meaningless remarks I have imposed on myself as a task, to lull reflection as well as to show you I did not neglect reading your valuable present. Return my acknowledgments to Lloyd; you, too, seem to be about realizing an Elysium upon earth, and, no doubt, I shall be happier. Take my best wishes. Remember me most affectionately to Mrs. C——, and give little David Hartley—God bless its little heart—a kiss for

me. Bring him up to know the meaning of his Christian name, and what that name (imposed upon him) will demand of him.

"God love you!

"C. LAMB.

"I write, for one thing, to say that I shall write no more till you send me word where you are, for you are so soon to move.

"My sister is pretty well, thank God. We think of you very often. God bless you; continue to be my correspondent, and I will strive to fancy that this world is *not* 'all barrenness.'"

After several disappointments, occasioned by the state of business at the India House, Lamb achieved his long-checked wish of visiting Coleridge at Stowey, in company with his sister, without whom he felt it almost a sin to enjoy anything. Coleridge, shortly after, abandoned his scheme of a cottage-life, and in the following year left England for Germany. Lamb, however, was not now so lonely as when he wrote to Coleridge imploring his correspondence as the only comfort of his sorrows and labours; for, through the instrumentality of Coleridge, he was now rich in friends. Among them he marked George Dyer, the guileless and simple-hearted, whose love of learning was a passion, and who found, even in the forms of verse, objects of worship; Southey, in the young vigour of his genius; and Wordsworth, the great regenerator of English poetry, preparing for his long contest with the glittering forms of inane phraseology which had usurped the dominion of the public mind, and with the cold mockeries of scorn with which their supremacy was defended. By those the beauty of his character was felt; the original cast of his powers was appreciated; and his peculiar humour was detected and kindled into fitful life.

CHAPTER IV.

[1798.]

Lamb's Literary Efforts and Correspondence with Southey.

In the year 1798, the blank verse of Lloyd and Lamb, which had been contained in the volume published in conjunction with Coleridge, was, with some additions by Lloyd, published in a thin duodecimo, price 2*s.* 6*d.*, under the title of "Blank Verse, by Charles Lloyd and Charles Lamb." This unpretending book was honoured by a brief and scornful notice in the catalogue of "The Monthly Review," in the small print of which the works of the poets who are now recognised as the greatest ornaments of their age, and who have impressed it most deeply by their genius, were usually named to be dismissed with a sneer. After a contemptuous notice of "The Mournful Muse" of Lloyd, Lamb receives his *quietus* in a line:—"Mr. Lamb, the joint author of this little volume, seems to be very properly associated with his plaintive companion."*

In this year Lamb composed his prose tale, "Rosamund Gray," and published it in a volume of the same size and price with the last, under the title of "A Tale of Rosamund Gray and Old Blind Margaret," which, having a semblance of story, sold much better than his poems, and added a few pounds to his slender income. This miniature romance is unique in English literature. It bears the impress of a recent perusal of "The Man of Feeling" and "Julia de Roubigné;" and while on the one hand it wants the graphic force and delicate touches of Mackenzie, it is informed with deeper feeling, and breathes a diviner morality than the most charming of his tales. Lamb never possessed the faculty of constructing a plot either for drama or novel; and while he luxuriated in the humour of Smollett, the wit of Fielding, or the solemn pathos of Richardson, he was not amused, but perplexed, by the attempt to tread the windings of story which conducts to their most exquisite passages through the maze of adventure. In this tale, nothing is made out with distinctness, except the rustic piety and grace of the lovely girl and her venerable grandmother, which are pictured with such earnestness and simplicity as might beseem a fragment of the Book of Ruth.

* Monthly Review, Sept., 1798.

The villain who lays waste their humble joys is a murky phantom without individuality; the events are obscured by the haze of sentiment which hovers over them; and the narrative gives way to the reflections of the author, who is mingled with the persons of the tale in visionary confusion, and gives to it the character of a sweet but disturbed dream. It has an interest now beyond that of fiction; for in it we may trace, "as in a glass darkly," the characteristics of the mind and heart of the author, at a time when a change was coming upon them. There are the dainty sense of beauty just weaned from its palpable object, and quivering over its lost images; feeling grown retrospective before its time, and tinging all things with a strange solemnity; hints of that craving after immediate appliances which might give impulse to a harassed frame, and confidence to struggling fancy, and of that escape from the pressure of agony into fantastic mirth which, in after life, made Lamb a problem to a stranger, while they endeared him a thousand-fold to those who really knew him. While the fulness of the religious sentiments and the scriptural cast of the language still partake of his early manhood, the visit of the narrator of the tale to the churchyard where his parents lie buried, after his nerves had been strung for the endeavour by wine at the village inn, and the half-frantic jollity of his old heart-broken friend (the lover of the tale) whom he met there, with the exquisite benignity of thought breathing through the whole, prophesy the delightful peculiarities and genial frailties of an after day. The reflections he makes on the eulogistic character of all the inscriptions are drawn from his own childhood; for, when a very little boy, walking with his sister in a churchyard, he suddenly asked her, "*Mary, where do the naughty people lie?*"

"Rosamund Gray" remained unreviewed till August, 1800, when it received the following notice in "The Monthly Review's" catalogue, the manufacturer of which was probably more tolerant of heterodox composition in prose than verse: "In the perusal of this pathetic and interesting story, the reader, who has a mind capable of enjoying rational and moral sentiment, will feel much gratification. Mr. Lamb has here proved himself skilful in touching the nicest feelings of the heart, and in affording great pleasure to the imagination, by exhibiting events and situations which, in the hands of a writer less conversant with the springs and energies of the *moral sense*, would make a very '*sorry figure.*'" While we acknowledge this scanty praise as a redeeming trait in the long series of critical absurdities, we cannot help observing how curiously misplaced all the laudatory epithets are; the sentiment being

profound and true, but not "*rational*," and the "springs and energies of the moral sense" being substituted for a weakness which had a power of its own!

Lamb was introduced by Coleridge to Southey as early as the year 1795; but no intimacy ensued until he accompanied Lloyd in the summer of 1797 to the little village of Burton, near Christchurch, in Hampshire, where Southey was then residing, and where they spent a fortnight as the poet's guests. After Coleridge's departure for Germany, in 1798, a correspondence began between Lamb and Southey which continued through that and part of the following year; Southey communicates to Lamb his Eclogues, which he was then preparing for the press, and Lamb repays the confidence by submitting the products of his own leisure hours to his genial critic. If Southey did not, in all respects, compensate Lamb for the absence of his earlier friend, he excited in him a more entire and active intellectual sympathy, as the character of Southey's mind bore more resemblance to his own than that of Coleridge. In purity of thought; in the love of the minutest vestige of antiquity; in a certain primness of style bounding in the rich humour which threatened to overflow it, they were nearly akin; both alike reverenced childhood, and both had preserved its best attributes unspotted from the world. If Lamb bowed to the genius of Coleridge with a fonder reverence, he felt more at home with Southey; and although he did not pour out the inmost secrets of his soul in his letters to him as to Coleridge, he gave more scope to the "first sprightly runnings" of his humorous fancy. Here is the first of his freaks:—

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

"My tailor has brought me home a new coat lapelled, with a velvet collar. He assures me everybody wears velvet collars now. Some are born fashionable, some achieve fashion, and others, like your humble servant, have fashion thrust upon them. The rogue has been making inroads hitherto by modest degrees, foisting upon me an additional button, recommending gaiters, but to come upon me thus in a full tide of luxury neither becomes him as a tailor nor the ninth of a man. My meek gentleman was robbed the other day, coming with his wife and family in a one-horse shay from Hampstead; the villains rifled him of four guineas, some shillings and halfpence, and a bundle of customers' measures, which they swore were bank notes. They did not shoot him, and when they rode off he addressed them with profound gratitude, making a congee; 'Gentlemen, I wish you good-night, and we are very much obliged to you that you have not used us ill!' And this

is the cuckoo that has had the audacity to foist upon me ten buttons on a side, and a black velvet collar. A cursed ninth of a scoundrel!"

* * * * * *

"When you write to Lloyd, he wishes his Jacobin correspondents to address him as *Mr.* C. L."

The following letter—yet richer in fun—bears date Saturday, July 28, 1798. In order to make its allusions intelligible, it is only necessary to mention that Southey was then contemplating a calendar illustrative of the remarkable days of the year.

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

"I am ashamed that I have not thanked you before this for the 'Joan of Arc,' but I did not know your address, and it did not occur to me to write through Cottle. The poem delighted me, and the notes amused me; but methinks she of Neufchatel, in the print, holds her sword too 'like a dancer.' I sent your *notice* to Phillips, particularly requesting an immediate insertion, but I suppose it came too late. I am sometimes curious to know what progress you make in that same 'Calendar,' whether you insert the nine worthies and Whittington; what you do or how you can manage when two saints meet and quarrel for precedency; Martlemas, and Candlemas, and Christmas are glorious themes for a writer like you, antiquity-bitten, smitten with the love of boars' heads and rosemary; but how you can ennoble the first of April I know not. By-the-way, I had a thing to say, but a certain false modesty has hitherto prevented me: perhaps I can best communicate my wish by a hint—my birthday is on the 10th of February, new style; but if it interferes with any remarkable event, why, rather than my country should lose her fame, I care not if I put my nativity back eleven days. Fine family patronage for your 'Calendar,' if that old lady of prolific memory were living, who lies (or lyes) in some church in London (saints forgive me, but I have forgot *what* church), attesting that enormous legend of as many children as days in the year. I marvel her impudence did not grasp at a leap year. Three hundred and sixty-five dedications, and all in a family—you might spit in spirit on the oneness of Mecænas patronage!

"Samuel Taylor Coleridge, to the eternal regret of his native Devonshire, emigrates to Westphalia. 'Poor Lamb (these were his last words), if he wants any *knowledge*, he may apply to me;' in ordinary cases I thanked him, I have an 'Ency*clope*dia' at hand; but on such an occasion as going over to a

German university, I could not refrain from sending him the following propositions, to be by him defended or oppugned (or both) at Leipsic or Gottingen.

THESES QUÆDAM THEOLOGICÆ.

I.

"Whether God loves a lying angel better than a true man?

II.

"Whether the Archangel Uriel *could* knowingly affirm an untruth, and whether, if he *could*, he *would?*

III.

"Whether honesty be an angelic virtue, or not rather belonging to that class of qualities which the schoolmen term 'virtutes minus splendidæ, et hominis et terræ nimis participes?'

IV.

"Whether the seraphim ardentes do not manifest their goodness by the way of vision and theory? and whether practice be not a sub-celestial, and merely human virtue?

V.

"Whether the higher order of seraphim illuminati ever *sneer?*

VI.

"Whether pure intelligences can *ove*, or whether they can love anything besides pure intellect?

VII.

"Whether the beatific vision be anything more or less than a perpetual representment to each individual angel of his own present attainments and future capabilities, something in the manner of mortal looking-glasses?

VIII.

"Whether an 'immortal and amenable soul' may not come *to be damned at last, and the man never suspect it beforehand?*

"Samuel Taylor hath not deigned an answer; was it impertinent in me to avail myself of that offered source of knowledge?

"Wishing Madoc may be born into the world with as splendid promise as the second birth or purification of the Maid of Neufchatel, I remain yours sincerely,

"C. LAMB.

"I hope Edith is better; my kindest remembrances to her. You have a good deal of trifling to forgive in this letter. Love and respects to Cottle."

The two next fragments of letters to Southey illustrate strikingly the restless kindness and exquisite spirit of allowance in Lamb's nature; the first an earnest pleading for a poor fellow whose distress actually haunted him; the second an affecting allusion to the real goodness of a wild, untoward schoolmate, and fine self-reproval—in this instance how unmerited!

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

"Dear Southey—Your friend, John May, has formerly made kind offers to Lloyd of serving me in the India House, by the interest of his friend, Sir Francis Baring. It is not likely that I shall ever put his goodness to the test on my own account, for my prospects are very comfortable. But I know a man, a young man, whom he could serve through the same channel, and, I think, would be disposed to serve if he were acquainted with his case. This poor fellow (whom I know just enough of to vouch for his strict integrity and worth) has lost two or three employments from illness which he cannot regain; he was once insane, and, from the distressful uncertainty of his livelihood, has reason to apprehend a return of that malady. He has been for some time dependant on a woman, whose lodger he formerly was, but who can ill afford to maintain him; and I know that on Christmas night last he actually walked about the streets all night rather than accept of her bed, which she offered him, and offered herself to sleep in the kitchen; and that, in consequence of that severe cold, he is labouring under a bilious disorder, besides a depression of spirits, which incapacitates him from exertion when he most needs it. For God's sake, Southey, if it does not go against you to ask favours, do it now; ask it as for me; but do not do a violence to your feelings, because he does not know of this application, and will suffer no disappointment. What I meant to say was this—there are in the India House what are called *extra clerks*, not on the establishment like me, but employed in extra business, by-jobs; these get about £50 a year, or rather more, but never rise; a director can put in at any time a young man in this office, and it is by no means considered so great a favour as making an established clerk. He would think himself as rich as an emperor if he could get such a certain situation, and be relieved from those disquietudes which, I do fear, may one day bring back his distemper.

"You know John May better than I do, but I know enough to believe that he is a good man; he did make me that offer I have mentioned, but you will perceive that such an offer cannot authorize me in applying for another person.

"But I cannot help writing to you on the subject, for the young man is perpetually before my eyes, and I shall feel it a crime not to strain all my petty interest to do him service, though I put my own delicacy to the question by so doing. I have made one other unsuccessful attempt already; at all events, I will thank you to write, for I am tormented with anxiety.

* * * * * *

"Poor ——! I am afraid the world, and the camp, and the university have spoiled him among them. 'Tis certain he had at one time a strong capacity of turning out something better. I knew him, and that not long since, when he had a most warm heart. I am ashamed of the indifference I have sometimes felt towards him. I think the devil is in one's heart. I am under obligations to that man for the warmest friendship and heartiest sympathy, even for an agony of sympathy expressed both by word, and deed, and tears for me, when I was in my greatest distress. But I have forgot that! as, I fear, he has nigh forgot the awful scenes which were before his eyes when he served the office of a comforter to me. No service was too mean or troublesome for him to perform. I can't think what but the devil, 'that old spider,' could have sucked my heart so dry of its sense of all gratitude. If he does come in your way, Southey, fail not to tell him that I retain a most affectionate remembrance of his old friendliness, and an earnest wish to resume our intercourse. In this I am serious. I cannot recommend him to your society, because I am afraid whether he be quite worthy of it. But I have no right to dismiss him from *my* regard. He was at one time, and in the worst of times, my own familiar friend, and great comfort to me then. I have known him to play at cards with my father, meal times excepted, literally all day long, in long days too, to save me from being teazed by the old man when I was not able to bear it.

"God bless him for it, and God bless you, Southey.

* * * * * *

"C. L."

Lamb now began to write the tragedy of John Woodvil. His admiration of the dramatists of Elizabeth's age was yet young, and had some of the indiscretion of an early love; but there was nothing affected in the antique cast of his language,

or the frequent roughness of his verse. His delicate sense of beauty had found a congenial organ in the style which he tasted with rapture; and criticism gave him little encouragement to adapt it to the frigid insipidities of the time. "My tragedy," says he, in the first letter to Southey which alludes to the play, "will be a medley (I intend it to be a medley) of laughter and tears, prose and verse, and, in some places, rhyme; songs, wit, pathos, humour; and, if possible, sublimity; at least, 'tis not a fault in my intention if it does not comprehend most of these discordant atoms: Heaven send they dance not the dance of death!" In another letter he there introduces the delicious rhymed passage in the "Forest Scene," which Godwin, having accidentally seen quoted, took for a choice fragment of some old dramatist, and went to Lamb to assist him in finding the author.

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

"I just send you a few rhymes from my play, the only rhymes in it. A forest-liver giving an account of his amusements.

'What sports have you in the forest?
Not many—some few—as thus:
To see the sun to bed, and see him rise,
Like some hot amourist with glowing eyes,
Bursting the lazy bands of sleep that bound him;
With all his fires and travelling glories round him:
Sometimes the moon on soft night-clouds to rest,
Like beauty nestling in a young man's breast.
And all the winking stars, her handmaids, keep
Admiring silence, while those lovers sleep:
Sometimes outstretch'd in very idleness,
Naught doing, saying little, thinking less,
To view the leaves, thin dancers upon air,
Go eddying round; and small birds how they fare,
When mother autumn fills their beaks with corn,
Filch'd from the careless Amathea's horn;
And how the woods berries and worms provide,
Without their pains, when earth hath naught beside
To answer their small wants;
To view the graceful deer come trooping by,
Then pause, and gaze, then turn they know not why,
Like bashful younkers in society;
To mark the structure of a plant or tree;
And all fair things of earth, how fair they be!' &c., &c.

"I love to anticipate charges of unoriginality: the first line is almost Shakspeare's:—

'To have my love to bed and to arise.'
Midsummer's Night's Dream.

"I think there is a sweetness in the versification not unlike some rhymes in that exquisite play, and the last line but three is yours:—

'An eye,
That met the gaze, or turn'd it knew not why.'
Rosamund's Epistle.

"I shall anticipate all my play, and have nothing to show you. An idea for Leviathan—commentators on Job have been puzzled to find out a meaning for Leviathan—'tis a whale, say some; a crocodile, say others. In my simple conjecture, Leviathan is neither more nor less than the Lord Mayor of London for the time being."

* * * * * *

He seems also to have sent, about this time, the solemnly fantastic poem of the "Witch," as the following passage relates to one of its conceits:—

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

"Your recipe for a Turk's poison is invaluable, and truly Marlowish. Lloyd objects to 'shutting up the womb of his purse' in my curse (which, for a Christian witch in a Christian country, is not too mild, I hope); do you object? I think there is a strangeness in the idea, as well as 'shaking the poor like snakes from his door,' which suits the speaker. Witches illustrate, as fine ladies do, from their own familiar objects, and snakes and shutting up of wombs are in their way. I don't know that this last charge has been before brought against 'em, nor either the sour milk or the mandrake babe; but I affirm these be things a witch would do if she could."

Here is a specimen of Lamb's criticism on Southey's poetical communications.

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

"I have read your Eclogue repeatedly, and cannot call it bald or without interest; the cast of it and the design are completely original, and may set people upon thinking: it is as poetical as the subject requires, which asks no poetry; but it is defective in pathos. The woman's own story is the tamest part of it; I should like you to remould that; it too much resembles the young maid's history; both had been in service. Even the omission would not injure the poem; after the words 'growing wants' you might, not unconnectedly, introduce 'look at that little chub' down to 'welcome one;' and, decidedly, I would have you end it somehow thus, 'Give them, at least this evening, a good meal (gives her money); now, fare thee well: hereafter you have taught me to give sad meaning to the village-bells,' &c., which would leave a stronger impression (as well as more pleasingly recall the

beginning of the Eclogue) than the present commonplace reference to a better world, which the woman 'must have heard at church.' I should like you, too, a good deal to enlarge the most striking part, as it might have been, of the poem—'Is it idleness?' &c., that affords a good field for dwelling on sickness, and inabilities, and old age. And you might also a good deal enrich the piece with a picture of a country wedding: the woman might very well, in a transient fit of oblivion, dwell upon the ceremony and circumstances of her own nuptials six years ago, the snugness of the bridegroom, the feastings, the cheap merriment, the welcomings, and the secret envyings of the maidens—then, dropping all this, recur to her present lot. I do not know that I can suggest anything else, or that I have suggested anything new or material. I shall be very glad to see some more poetry, though, I fear, your trouble in transcribing will be greater than the service my remarks may do them.

"Yours affectionately,

"C. LAMB.

"I cut my letter short because I am called off to business."

The following, of the same character, is further interesting, as tracing the origin of his "Rosamund," and exhibiting his young enthusiasm for the old English drama so nobly developed in his "Specimens:"—

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

"Dear Southey—I thank you heartily for the Eclogue; it pleases me mightily, being so full of picture-work and circumstances. I find no fault in it, unless, perhaps, that Joanna's ruin is a catastrophe too trite: and this is not the first or second time you have clothed your indignation, in verse, in a tale of ruined innocence. The old lady, spinning in the sun, I hope, would not disdain to claim some kindred with old Margaret. I could almost wish you to vary some circumstances in the conclusion. A gentleman seducer has often been described in prose and verse; what if you had accomplished Joanna's ruin by the clumsy arts and rustic gifts of some country fellow? I am thinking, I believe, of the song,

'An old woman clothed in gray,
Whose daughter was charming and young,
And she was deluded away
By Roger's false flattering tongue.'

A Roger-Lothario would be a novel character; I think you might paint him very well. You may think this a very silly suggestion, and so indeed it is; but, in good truth, nothing else

but the first words of that foolish ballad put me upon scribbling my 'Rosamund.' But I thank you heartily for the poem. Not having anything of my own to send you in return—though, to tell truth, I am at work upon something, which, if I were to cut away and garble, perhaps I might send you an extract or two that might not displease you; but I will not do that; and whether it will come to anything, I know not, for I am as slow as a Fleming painter when I compose anything—I will crave leave to put down a few lines of old Christopher Marlow's; I take them from his tragedy, 'The Jew of Malta.' The Jew is a famous character, quite out of nature; but, when we consider the terrible idea our simple ancestors had of a Jew, not more to be discommended for a certain discolouring (I think Addison calls it) than the witches and fairies of Marlow's mighty successor. The scene is between Barabas, the Jew, and Ithamore, a Turkish captive, exposed to sale for a slave.

BARABAS.

(*A precious rascal.*)

'As for myself, I walk abroad a nights,
And kill sick people groaning under walls:
Sometimes I go about, and poison wells;
And now and then, to cherish Christian thieves,
I am content to lose some of my crowns,
That I may, walking in my gallery,
See 'm go pinion'd along by my door.
Being young, I studied physic, and began
To practise first upon the Italian:
There I enrich'd the priests with burials,
And always kept the sexton's arms in use
With digging graves, and ringing dead men's knells;
And, after that, was I an engineer,
And in the wars 'tween France and Germany,
Under pretence of serving Charles the Fifth,
Slew friend and enemy with my stratagems.
Then after that was I a usurer,
And with extorting, cozening, forfeiting,
And tricks belonging unto brokery,
I fill'd the jail with bankrupts in a year,
And with young orphans planted hospitals,
And every moon made some or other mad;
And now and then one hang himself for grief,
Pinning upon his breast a long great scroll,
How I with interest had tormented him.'

(Now hear Ithamore, the other gentle nature.)

ITHAMORE.

(*A comical dog.*)

'Faith, master, and I have spent my time
In setting Christian villages on fire,
Chaining of eunuchs, binding galley-slaves.
One time I was an hostler in an inn,

And in the nighttime secretly would I steal
To travellers' chambers, and there cut their throats.
Once at Jerusalem, where the pilgrims kneel'd,
I strew'd powder on the marble stones,
And therewithal their knees would rankle so,
That I have laugh'd a good to see the cripples
Go limping home to Christendom on stilts'

BARABAS.

'Why, this is something—'

"There is a mixture of the ludicrous and the terrible in these lines, brimful of genius and antique invention, that at first reminded me of your old description of cruelty in hell.

* * * * * * *

"I am glad you have put me on the scent after old Quarles. If I do not put up those eclogues, and that shortly, say I am no true-nosed hound."

The following letters, which must have been written after a short interval, show a rapid change of opinion, very unusual with Lamb (who stuck to his favourite books as he did to his friends), as to the relative merits of the "Emblems" of Wither, and of Quarles:—

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

"I perfectly accord with your opinion of old Wither; Quarles is a wittier writer, but Wither lays more hold of the heart. Quarles thinks of his audience when he lectures; Wither soliloquizes in company from a full heart. What wretched stuff are the 'Divine Fancies' of Quarles! Religion appears to him no longer valuable than it furnishes matter for quibbles and riddles; he turns God's grace into wantonness. Wither is like an old friend, whose warm-heartedness and estimable qualities make us wish he possessed more genius, but at the same time make us willing to dispense with that want. I always love W., and sometimes admire Q. Still that portrait poem is a fine one; and the extract from 'Shepherds' Hunting' places him in a starry height far above Quarles. If you wrote that review in 'Crit. Rev.,' I am sorry you are so sparing of praise to the Ancient Marinere; so far from calling it as you do, with some wit, but more severity, 'A Dutch attempt,' &c., I call it a right English attempt, and a successful one, to dethrone German sublimity. You have selected a passage fertile in unmeaning miracles, but have passed by fifty passages as miraculous as the miracles they celebrate. I never so deeply felt the pathetic as in that part,

'A spring of love gush'd from my heart,
And I bless'd them unaware'—

It stung me into high pleasure through sufferings. Lloyd does not like it; his head is too metaphysical, and your taste too correct; at least I must allege something against you both to excuse my own dotage—

> 'So lonely 'twas that God himself
> Scarce seemed there to be!' &c., &c.

But you allow some elaborate beauties; you should have extracted 'em. 'The Ancient Marinere' play smore tricks with the mind than that last poem, which is yet one of the finest written. But I am getting too dogmatical; and, before I degenerate into abuse, I will conclude with assuring you that I am

"Sincerely yours,

"C. LAMB.

"I am going to meet Lloyd at Ware, on Saturday, to return on Sunday. Have you any commands or commendations to the metaphysician? I shall be very happy if you will dine or spend any time with me in your way through the great ugly city; but I know you have other ties upon you in these parts.

"Love and respects to Edith, and friendly remembrances to Cottle."

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

"Dear Southey—I have at last been so fortunate as to pick up Wither's Emblems for you, that 'old book and quaint,' as the brief author of Rosamund Gray hath it; it is in a most detestable state of preservation, and the cuts are of a fainter impression than I have seen. Some child, the curse of antiquaries and bane of bibliopical rarities, hath been dabbling in some of them with its paint and dirty fingers; and, in particular, hath a little sullied the author's own portraiture, which I think valuable, as the poem that accompanies it is no common one, this last excepted; the Emblems are far inferior to old Quarles. I once told you otherwise, but I had not then read old Q. with attention. I have picked up, too, another copy of Quarles for ninepence!!! O tempora! O lectores! so that, if you have lost or parted with your own copy, say so, and I can furnish you, for you prize these things more than I do. You will be amused, I think, with honest Wither's 'Supersedeas to all them whose custom it is, without any deserving, to importune authors to give unto them their books.' I am sorry 'tis imperfect, as the lottery board annexed to it also is. Methinks you might modernize and elegantize the Supersedeas, and place it in front of your Joan of Arc, as a gentle hint to Messrs. P——, &c. One of the happiest emblems and comicalest cuts is the owl and little chirpers, page 63.

"Wishing you all amusement, which your true emblem-

fancier can scarce fail to find in even bad emblems, I remain your caterer to command,

"C. LAMB.

"Love and respects to Edith. I hope she is well. How does your Calendar prosper?"

In this year Mr. Cottle proposed to publish an annual volume of fugitive poetry by various hands, under the title of the "Annual Anthology;" to which Coleridge and Southey were principal contributors, the first volume of which was published in the following year. To this little work Lamb contributed a short religious effusion in blank verse, entitled "Living without God in the World." The following letter to Southey refers to this poem by its first words, "Mystery of God," and recurs to the rejected sonnet to his sister; and alludes to an intention, afterward changed, of entitling the proposed collection "Gleanings."

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

"I can have no objection to your printing 'Mystery of God' with my name, and all due acknowledgments for the honour and favour of the communication; indeed, 'tis a poem that can dishonour no name. Now that is in the true strain of modern modesto-vanitas. . . But for the sonnet, I heartily wish it, as I thought it was, dead and forgotten. If the exact circumstances under which I wrote could be known or told, it would be an interesting sonnet; but, to an indifferent and stranger reader, it must appear a very bald thing, certainly inadmissible in a compilation. I wish you could affix a different name to the volume; there is a contemptible book, a wretched assortment of vapid feelings, entitled '*Pratt's Gleanings*,' which hath damned and impropriated the title for ever. Pray think of some other. The gentleman is better known (better had he remained unknown) by an Ode to Benevolence, written and spoken for and at the annual dinner of the Humane Society, who walk in procession once a year, with all the objects of their charity before them, to return God thanks for giving them such benevolent hearts."

* * * * * *

At this time Lamb's most intimate associates were Lloyd and Jem White, the author of the Falstaff Letters. When Lloyd was in town, he and White lodged in the same house, and were fast friends, though no two men could be more unlike, Lloyd having no drollery in his nature, and White nothing else. "You will easily understand," observes Mr. Southey,

letter with which he favoured the publisher, "how Lamb
d sympathize with both."

'he literary association of Lamb with Coleridge and Southey
w down upon him the hostility of the young scorners of the
ıti-Jacobin," who, luxuriating in boyish pride and aristocratic
onage, tossed the arrows of their wit against all charged
ı innovation, whether in politics or poetry, and cared little
ɔm they wounded. No one could be more innocent than
ab of political heresy; no one more strongly opposed to new
ɔries in morality, which he always regarded with disgust;
yet he not only shared in the injustice which accused his
ads of the last, but was confounded in the charge of the
, his only crime being that he had published a few poems
ply coloured with religious enthusiasm, in conjunction
ı two other men of genius, who were dazzled by the glow-
phantoms which the French revolution had raised. The
r first number of the "Anti-Jacobin Magazine and Review"
adorned by a caricature of Gilray's, in which Coleridge
Southey were introduced with asses' heads, and Lloyd
Lamb as toad and frog. In the number for July appeared
well-known poem of the "New Morality," in which all
prominent objects of the hatred of these champions of re-
n and order were introduced as offering homage to Le-
:, a French charlatan, of whose existence Lamb had never
. heard.

"Couriers and Stars, sedition's evening host,
Thou Morning Chronicle and Morning Post,
Whether ye make the 'Rights of Man' your theme,
Your country libel, and your God blaspheme,
Or dirt on private worth and virtue throw,
Still *blasphemous or blackguard*, praise Lepaux.

And ye five other wand'ring bards that move
In sweet accord of harmony and love,
C——dge and S—th—y, L—d, and L—b, & Co.,
Tune all your mystic harps to praise Lepaux!"

ot content with thus confounding persons of the most op-
te opinions and the most various characters in one com-
. libel, the party returned to the charge in the number for
tember, and thus denounced the young poets, in a parody
he "Ode to the Passions," under the title of "The Anar-
ts."

"Next H—lc—ft vow'd, in doleful tone,
No more to fire a thankless age:
Oblivion mark'd his labours for her own,
Neglected from the press, and damn'd upon the stage.

See! faithful to their mighty dam,
C——dge, S—th—y, L—d, and L—b

In splay-foot madrigals of love,
Soft moaning like the widow'd dove,
Pour, side by side, their sympathetic notes;

Of equal rights, and civic feasts,
And tyrant kings, and knavish priests,
Swift through the land the tuneful mischief floats.
And now to softer strains they struck the lyre,
They sung the beetle or the mole,
The dying kid, or ass's foal,
By cruel man permitted to expire."

These effusions have the palliation which the excess of sportive wit, impelled by youthful spirits, and fostered by the applause of the great, brings with it; but it will be difficult to palliate the coarse malignity of a passage in the prose department of the same work, in which the writer added to a statement that Mr. Coleridge was dishonoured at Cambridge for preaching Deism: "Since then he has left his native country, commenced citizen of the world, left his poor children fatherless, and his wife destitute. *Ex his disce*, his friends Lamb and Southey." It was surely rather too much, even for partisans, when denouncing their political opponents as men who "dirt on private worth and virtue threw," thus to slander two young men of the most exemplary character—one of an almost puritanical exactness of demeanour and conduct, and the other persevering in a life of noble self-sacrifice, checkered only by the frailties of a sweet nature, which endeared him even to those who were not admitted to the intimacy necessary to appreciate the touching example of his severer virtues!

If Lamb's acquaintance with Coleridge and Southey procured for him the scorn of the more virulent of the Anti-Jacobin party, he showed, by his intimacy with another distinguished object of their animosity, that he was not solicitous to avert it. He was introduced by Mr. Coleridge to one of the most remarkable persons of that stirring time—the author of "Caleb Williams" and of the "Political Justice." The first meeting between Lamb and Godwin did not wear a promising aspect. Lamb grew warm as the conviviality of the evening advanced, and indulged in some freaks of humour which had not been dreamed of in Godwin's philosophy; and the philospher, forgetting the equanimity with which he usually looked on the vicissitudes of the world or the whist-table, broke into an allusion to Gilray's caricature, and asked, "Mr. Lamb, are you both *toad and frog?*" Coleridge was apprehensive of a rupture; but, calling the next morning on Lamb, he found Godwin seated at breakfast with him; and an interchange of civilities and card-parties was established, which lasted through the life of Lamb, whom Godwin only survived a few months. Indifferent altogether to the politics of the age, Lamb could

not help being struck with productions of its newborn energies, so remarkable as the works and the character of Godwin. He seemed to realize in himself what Wordsworth long afterward described, "the central calm at the heart of all agitation." Through the medium of his mind the stormy convulsions of society were seen "silent as in a picture." Paradoxes the most daring wore the air of deliberate wisdom as he pronounced them. He foretold the future happiness of mankind, not with the inspiration of the poet, but with the grave and passionless voice of the oracle. There was nothing better calculated at once to feed and to make steady the enthusiasm of youthful patriots than the high speculations in which he taught them to engage on the nature of social evils and the great destiny of his species. No one would have suspected the author of those wild theories, which startled the wise and shocked the prudent, in the calm, gentlemanly person who rarely said anything above the most gentle commonplace, and took interest in little beyond the whist-table. His peculiar opinions were entirely subservient to his love of letters. He thought any man who had written a book had attained a superiority over his fellows which placed him in another class, and could scarcely understand other distinctions. Of all his works Lamb liked his "Essay on Sepulchres" the best—a short development of a scheme for preserving in one place the memory of all great writers deceased, and assigning to each his proper station—quite chimerical in itself, but accompanied with solemn and touching musings on life, and death, and fame, imbodied in a style of singular refinement and beauty.

CHAPTER V.

[1799, 1800.]

Letters to Southey, Coleridge, Manning, and Wordsworth.

THE year 1799 found Lamb engaged during his leisure hours in completing his tragedy of John Woodvil, which seems to have been finished about Christmas, and transmitted to Mr. Kemble. Like all young authors, who are fascinated by the splendour of theatrical representations, he longed to see his conceptions imbodied on the stage, and to receive his immediate reward in the sympathy of a crowd of excited spectators. The hope was vain; but it cheered him in many a

lonely hour, and inspired him to write when exhausted with the business of the day, and when the less powerful stimulus of the press would have been insufficient to rouse him. In the mean time he continued to correspond with Mr. Southey, to send him portions of his play, and to reciprocate criticisms with him. The following three letters, addressed to Mr. Southey in the spring of this year, require no commentary.

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

* * * * * *

"I am to blame for not writing to you before on *my own account;* but I know you can dispense with the expressions of gratitude, or I should have thanked you before for all May's kindness.* He has liberally supplied the person I spoke to you of with money, and had procured him a situation just after himself had lighted upon a similar one, and engaged too far to recede. But May's kindness was the same, and my thanks to you and him are the same. May went about on this business as if it had been his own. But you knew John May before this, so I will be silent.

"I shall be very glad to hear from you, when convenient. I do not know how your Calendar and other affairs thrive; but, above all, I have not heard a great while of your Madoc —the *opus magnum.* I would willingly send you something to give a value to this letter; but I have only one slight passage to send you, scarce worth the sending, which I want to edge in somewhere into my play, which, by-the-way, hath not received the addition of ten lines, besides, since I saw you. A father, old Walter Woodvil (the witch's PROTÉGÉ), relates this of his son John, who 'fought in adverse armies,' being a royalist, and his father a parliamentary man.

"I saw him in the day of Worcester fight,
Whither he came at twice seven years,
Under the discipline of the Lord Falkland
(His uncle by the mother's side,
Who gave his youthful politics a bent
Quite *from* the principles of his father's house);
There did I see this valiant Lamb of Mars,
This sprig of honour, this unbearded John,
This veteran in green years, this sprout, this Woodvil
(With dreadless ease guiding a fire-hot steed,
Which seemed to scorn the manage of a boy),
Prick forth with such a *mirth* into the field,
To mingle rivalship and acts of war
Even with the sinewy masters of the art—
You would have thought the work of blood had been
A play-game merely, and the rabid Mars
Had put his harmful hostile nature off,
To instruct raw youth in images of war,
And practice of the unedged players' foils.

* See *ante*, p. 56.

The rough fanatic and blood-practised soldiery,
Seeing such hope and virtue in the boy,
Disclosed their ranks to let him pass unhurt,
Checking their swords' uncivil injuries,
As loath to mar that curious workmanship
Of Valour's beauty portrayed in his face.'

"Lloyd objects to 'portrayed in his face,' do you? I like the line.

"I shall clap this in somewhere. I think there is a spirit through the lines; perhaps the seventh, eighth, and ninth owe their origin to Shakspeare, though no image is borrowed. He says in Henry the Fourth—

'This infant Hotspur,
Mars in swathing clothes.'

But, pray, did Lord Falkland die before Worcester fight? In that case I must make bold to unclify some other nobleman.

"Kind love and respects to Edith.

"C. LAMB."

* * * * * *

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

"I am hugely pleased with your 'Spider,' 'your old freemason,' as you call him. The three first stanzas are delicious; they seem to me a compound of Burns and old Quarles, those kind of homestrokes, where more is felt than strikes the ear; a terseness, a jocular pathos, which makes one feel in laughter. The measure, too, is novel and pleasing. I could almost wonder Rob. Burns, in his lifetime, never stumbled upon it. The fourth stanza is less striking, as being less original. The fifth falls off. It has no felicity of phrase, no oldfashioned phrase or feeling.

'Young hopes, and love's delightful dreams,'

savour neither of Burns nor Quarles; they seem more like shreds of many a modern sentimental sonnet. The last stanza hath nothing striking in it if I except the two concluding lines, which are Burns all over. I wish, if you concur with me, these things could be looked to. I am sure this is a kind of writing which comes tenfold better recommended to the heart, comes there more like a neighbour or familiar, than thousands of Hamnels, and Zillahs, and Madelons. I beg you will send me the 'Holly-tree,' if it at all resemble this, for it must please me. I have never seen it. I love this sort of poems, that open a new intercourse with the most despised of the animal and insect race. I think this vein may be further opened. Peter Pindar hath very prettily apostrophized a fly; Burns hath his mouse and his louse; Cole-

ridge less successfully hath made overtures of intimacy to a jackass, therein only following, at unresembling distance, Sterne and greater Cervantes. Besides these, I know of no other examples of breaking down the partition between us and our 'poor earthborn companions.' It is sometimes revolting to be put in a track of feeling by other people, not one's own immediate thoughts, else I would persuade you, if I could, I am in earnest, to commence a series of these animal poems, which might have a tendency to rescue some poor creatures from the antipathy of mankind. Some thoughts come across me; for instance—to a rat, to a toad, to a cockchafer, to a mole—people bake moles alive by a slow oven-fire to cure consumption—rats are, indeed, the most despised and contemptible parts of God's earth. I killed a rat the other day by punching him to pieces, and feel a weight of blood upon me to this hour. Toads, you know, are made to fly, and tumble down, and crush all to pieces. Cockchafers are old sport; then, again, to a worm, with an apostrophe to anglers, those patient tyrants, meek inflictors of pangs intolerable, cool devils; to an owl; to all snakes, with an apology for their poison; to a cat in boots or bladders. Your own fancy, if it takes a fancy to these hints, will suggest many more. A series of such poems, suppose them accompanied with plates descriptive of animal torments, cooks roasting lobsters, fishmongers crimping scates, &c., &c., would take excessively. I will willingly enter into a partnership in the plan with you; I think my heart and soul would go with it too—at least, give it a thought. My plan is but this minute come into my head; but it strikes me instantaneously as something new, good, and useful, full of pleasure, and full of moral. If old Quarles and Wither could live again, we would invite them into our firm. Burns hath done his part.

* * * * * *

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

"Dear Southey—I have received your little volume, for which I thank you, though I do not entirely approve of this sort of intercourse, where the presents are all on one side. I have read the last Eclogue again with great pleasure. It hath gained considerably by abridgment, and now I think it wants nothing but enlargement. You will call this one of tyrant Procrustes' criticisms, to cut and pull so to his own standard; but the old lady is so great a favourite with me, I want to hear more of her; and of 'Joanna' you have given us still less. But the picture of the rustics leaning over the bridge, and the old lady travelling abroad on summer evening to see

her garden watered, are images so new and true, that I decidedly prefer this 'Ruined Cottage' to any poem in the book. Indeed, I think it the only one that will bear comparison with your 'Hymn to the Penates,' in a former volume.

"I compare dissimilar things as one would a rose and a star, for the pleasure they give us, or as a child soon learns to choose between a cake and a rattle; for dissimilars have mostly some points of comparison. The next best poem, I think, is the first Eclogue; 'tis very complete, and abounding in little pictures and realities. The remainder Eclogues, excepting only the 'Funeral,' I do not greatly admire. I miss *one*, which had at least as good a title to publication as the 'Witch' or the 'Sailor's Mother.' You called it the 'Last of the Family.' The 'Old Woman of Berkeley' comes next; in some humours I would give it the preference above any. But who the devil is Matthew of Westminster? You are as familiar with these antiquated monastics as Swedenborg, or, as his followers affect to call him, the Baron, with his invisibles. But you have raised a very comic effect out of the true narrative of Matthew of Westminster. 'Tis surprising with how little addition you have been able to convert, with so little alteration, his incidents, meant for terror, into circumstances and food for spleen. The Parody is *not* so successful; it has one famous line, indeed, which conveys the finest deathbed scene I ever met with.

'The doctor whisper'd the nurse, and the surgeon knew what he said.'

But the offering the bride three times bears not the slightest analogy or proportion to the fiendish noises three times heard! In 'Jaspar,' the circumstance of the great light is very affecting. But I had heard you mention it before. The 'Rose' is the only insipid piece in the volume; it hath neither thorns nor sweetness; and, besides, sets all chronology and probability at defiance.

"'Cousin Margaret,' you know, I like. The allusions to the Pilgrim's Progress are particularly happy, and harmonize tacitly and delicately with old cousins and aunts. To familiar faces we do associate familiar scenes and accustomed objects; but what hath Apollidon and his sea-nymphs to do in these affairs? Apollyon I could have borne, though he stands for the devil, but who is Apollidon? I think you are too apt to conclude faintly with some cold moral, as in the end of the poem called 'The Victory'—

'Be thou her comforter, who art the widow's friend;'

a single commonplace line of comfort, which bears no proportion in weight or number to the many lines which describe

suffering. This is to convert religion into mediocre feelings, which should burn, and glow, and tremble. A moral should be wrought into the body and soul, the matter and tendency of a poem, not tagged to the end, like a 'God send the good ship into harbour' at the conclusion of our bills of lading. The finishing of the 'Sailor' is also imperfect. Any dissenting minister may say and do as much.

"These remarks, I know, are crude and unwrought, but I do not lay claim to much accurate thinking. I never judge system-wise of things, but fasten often upon particulars. After all, there is a great deal in the book that I must, for time, leave *unmentioned*, to deserve my thanks for its own sake, as well as for the friendly remembrances implied in the gift. I again return you my thanks.

"Pray present my love to Edith.

"C. LAMB."

In the summer Lamb revisited the scenes in Hertfordshire, where, in his grandmother's time, he had spent so many happy holydays. In the following letter he just hints at feelings which, many years after, he so beautifully developed in those essays of "Elia"—"Blakesmoor House" and "Mackery End."

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

"Dear Southey—I have but just got your letter, being returned from Herts., where I have passed a few red-letter days with much pleasure. I would describe the country to you, as you have done by Devonshire, but, alas! I am a poor pen at that same. I could tell you of an old house with a tapestry bedroom, the judgment of Solomon composing one panel, and Actæon spying Diana naked the other. I could tell of an old marble hall with Hogarth's prints, and the Roman Cæsars in marble hung round. I could tell of a *wilderness*, and of a village church, and where the bones of my honoured grandam lie; but there are feelings which refuse to be translated, sulky aborigines, which will not be naturalized in another soil. Of this nature are old family faces and scenes of infancy.

"I have given your address and the books you want to the A——'s; they will send them as soon as they can get them, but they do not seem quite familiar to their names. I shall have nothing to communicate, I fear, to the Anthology. You shall have some fragments of my play, if you desire them, but I think I had rather print it whole. Have you seen it? or shall I lend you a copy? I want your opinion of it.

"I must get to business, so farewell; my kind remembrances to Edith."

In the autumn of this year Lamb's choice list of friends received a most important addition in Mr. Thomas Manning, then a mathematical tutor at Cambridge; of whom he became a frequent correspondent, and to whom he remained strongly attached through life. Lloyd had become a graduate of the university, and to his introduction Lamb was indebted for Manning's friendship. The following letters will show how earnestly, yet how modestly, Lamb sought it.

TO MR. MANNING.

"Dear Manning—The particular kindness, even up to a degree of attachment, which I have experienced from you, seems to claim some distinct acknowledgment on my part. I could not content myself with a bare remembrance to you, conveyed in some letter to Lloyd.

"Will it be agreeable to you if I occasionally recruit your memory of me, which else must soon fade, if you consider the brief intercourse we have had? I am not likely to prove a troublesome correspondent. My scribbling days are past. I shall have no sentiments to communicate but as they spring up from some living and worthy occasion.

"I look forward with great pleasure to the performance o. your promise, that we should meet in London early in the ensuing year. The century must needs commence auspiciously for me, that brings with it Manning's friendship as an earnest of its after gifts.

"I should have written before but for a troublesome inflammation in one of my eyes, brought on by night travelling with the coach windows sometimes up.

"What more I have to say shall be reserved for a letter to Lloyd. I must not prove tedious to you in my first outside, lest I should affright you by my ill-judged loquacity.

I am,

"Yours most sincerely,

"C. Lamb."

TO MR. MANNING.

"Dear Manning—Having suspended my correspondence a decent interval, as knowing that even good things may be taken to satiety, a wish cannot but recur to learn whether you be still well and happy. Do all things continue in the state I left them in Cambridge?

"Do your night parties still flourish? and do you continue to bewilder your company, with your thousand faces, running down through all the keys of idiotism (like Lloyd over his perpetual harpsichord), from the smile and the glimmer of half-

sense and quarter-sense, to the grin and hanging lip of Betty Foy's own Johnny? And does the face-dissolving curfew sound at twelve? How unlike the great originals were your petty terrors in the postscript, not fearful enough to make a fairy shudder, or a Lilliputian fine lady, eight months full of child, miscarry. Yet one of them, which had more beast than the rest, I thought faintly resembled *one* of your brutifications. But, seriously, I long to see your own honest Manning-face again. I did not mean a pun; your *man's* face, you will be apt to say, I know your wicked will to pun. I cannot now write to Lloyd and you too, so you must convey as much interesting intelligence as this may contain, or be thought to contain, to him and Sophia, with my dearest love and remembrances.

"By-the-by, I think you and Sophia both incorrect with regard to the *title* of the *play*.* Allowing your objection (which is not necessary, as pride may be, and is, in real life, often cured by misfortunes not directly originating from its own acts, as Jeremy Taylor will tell you, a naughty desire is sometimes sent to cure it. I know you read these *practical divines*), but allowing your objection, does not the betraying of his father's secret directly spring from pride? from the pride of wine and a full heart, and a proud overstepping of the ordinary rules of morality, and contempt of the prejudices of mankind, which are not to bind superior souls—'as *trust* in *the matter* of *secrets* all *ties* of *blood*, &c., &c., keeping of *promises*, the feeble mind's religion, binding our *morning knowledge* to the performance of what *last night's ignorance* spake'—does he not prate that '*Great Spirits*' must do more than die for their friend? does not the pride of wine incite him to display some evidence of friendship, which its own irregularity shall make great? This I know, that I meant his punishment not alone to be a cure for his daily and habitual *pride*, but the direct consequence and appropriate punishment of a particular act of pride.

"If you do not understand it so, it is my fault in not explaining my meaning.

"I have not seen Coleridge since, and scarcely expect to see him; perhaps he has been at Cambridge.

"Need I turn over, to blot a fresh, clean half-sheet? merely to say, what I hope you are sure of without my repeating it, that I would have you consider me, dear Manning,

"Your sincere friend,

"C. LAMB."

* It had been proposed to entitle John Woodvil "Pride's Cure."

Early in the following year (1800), Lamb, with his sister, removed to Chapel-street, Pentonville. In the summer he visited Coleridge at Stowey, and spent a few delightful holydays in his society and that of Wordsworth, who then resided in the neighbourhood. This was the first opportunity Lamb had enjoyed of seeing much of the poet who was destined to exercise a beneficial and lasting influence on the literature and moral sense of the opening century. At this time Lamb was scarcely prepared to sympathize with the naked simplicity of the "Lyrical Ballads" which Wordsworth was preparing for the press. The "rich conceits" of the writers of Elizabeth's reign had been blended with his first love of poetry, and he could not at once acknowledge the serene beauty of a style in which language was only the stainless mirror of thought, and which sought no aid either from the grandeur of artificial life or the pomp of words. In after days he was among the most earnest of this great poet's admirers, and rejoiced as he found the scoffers who sneered at his bold experiment gradually owning his power. How he felt when the little golden opportunity of conversation with Wordsworth and Coleridge had passed will appear from the following letter, which seems to have been addressed to Coleridge shortly after his return to London.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"I am scarcely yet so reconciled to the loss of you, or so subsided into my wonted uniformity of feeling, as to sit calmly down to think of you and write to you. But I reason myself into the belief that those few and pleasant holydays shall not have been spent in vain. I feel improvement in the recollection of many a casual conversation. The names of Tom Poole, of Wordsworth and his good sister, with thine and Sarah's, are become 'familiar in my mouth as household words.' You would make me very happy, if you think W. has no objection, by transcribing for me that inscription of his. I have some scattered sentences ever floating on my memory, teazing me that I cannot remember more of it. You may believe I will make no improper use of it. Believe me, I can think now of many subjects on which I had planned gaining information from you; but I forgot my 'treasure's worth' while I possessed it. Your leg is now become to me a matter of much more importance; and many a little thing, which, when I was present with you, seemed scarce to *indent* my notice, now presses painfully on my remembrance. Is the Patriot come yet? Are Wordsworth and his sister gone yet? I was looking ou for John Thelwall all the way from Bridgewater, and, had

I met him, I think it would have moved me to tears. You will oblige me, too, by sending me my greatcoat, which I left behind in the oblivious state the mind is thrown into at parting; is it not ridiculous that I sometimes envy that greatcoat lingering so cunningly behind; at present I have none, so send it me by a Stowey wagon, if there be such a thing, directing for C. L., No. 45 Chapel-street, Pentonville, near London. But, above all, *that inscription!* it will recall to me the tones of all your voices, and with them many a remembered kindness to one who could and can repay you all only by the silence of a grateful heart. I could not talk much while I was with you, but my silence was not sullenness, nor, I hope, from any bad motive; but, in truth, disuse has made me awkward at it. I know I behaved myself, particularly at Tom Poole's and at Cruikshank's, most like a sulky child; but company and converse are strange to me. It was kind in you all to endure me as you did.

"Are you and your dear Sarah—to me also very dear, because very kind—agreed yet about the management of little Hartley, and how go on the little rogue's teeth? I will see White to-morrow, and he shall send you information on that matter; but, as perhaps I can do it as well after talking with him, I will keep this letter open.

"My love and thanks to you, and all of you.

"C. L.

"Wednesday evening."

Coleridge shortly after came to town, to make arrangements for his contributions to the daily press. The following note is addressed to him when in London.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"Dear Coleridge—Now I write, I cannot miss this opportunity of acknowledging the obligations myself, and the readers in general of that luminous paper, the 'Morning Post,' are under to you for the very novel and exquisite manner in which you combined political with grammatical science in your yesterday's dissertation on Mr. Wyndham's unhappy composition. It must have been the death-blow to that ministry. I expect Pitt and Grenville to resign. More especially the delicate and Cottrellian grace with which you officiated, with a ferula for a white wand, as gentleman usher to the word 'also,' which, it seems, did not know its place.

"I expect Manning of Cambridge in town to-night; will you fulfil your promise of meeting him at my house? He is a man of a thousand. Give me a line to say what day, whether

Saturday, Sunday, Monday, &c., and if Sarah and the Philosopher can come. I am afraid, if I did not at intervals call upon you, I should *never see you*. But I forget the affairs of the nation engross your time and your mind.

"Farewell,

"C. L."

Coleridge afterward spent some weeks with Lamb, as appears from the following letter:—

TO MR. MANNING.

"Dear Manning—I am living in a continuous feast. Coleridge has been with me now for nigh three weeks, and the more I see of him in the quotidian undress and relaxation of his mind, the more cause I see to love him, and believe him a *very good man*, and all those foolish impressions to the contrary fly off like morning slumbers. He is engaged in translations, which, I hope, will keep him this month to come. He is uncommonly kind and friendly to me. He ferrets me day and night to *do something*. He tends me, amid all his own worrying and heart-oppressing occupations, as a gardener tends his young *tulip*. Marry come up! what a pretty similitude, and how like your humble servant! He has lugged me to the brink of engaging to a newspaper, and has suggested to me, for a first plan, the forgery of a supposed manuscript of Burton, the anatomist of melancholy. I have even written the introductory letter; and, if I can pick up a few guineas this way, I feel they will be most *refreshing*, bread being so dear. If I go on with it, I will apprize you of it, as you may like to see my things! and the *tulip*, of all flowers, loves to be admired most.

"Pray pardon me, if my letters do not come very thick. I am so taken up with one thing or other that I cannot pick out (I will not say time, but) fitting times to write to you. My dear love to Lloyd and Sophia, and pray split this thin letter into three parts, and present them with the *two biggest* in my name.

"They are my oldest friends; but, ever the new friend driveth out the old, as the ballad sings! God bless you all three! I would hear from Ll. if I could.

"C. L.

"Flour has just fallen nine shillings a sack! we shall be all too rich.

"Tell Charles I have seen his mamma, and have almost fallen in love with *her*, since I mayn't with Olivia. She is so fine and graceful, a complete matron-lady-Quaker. She has

given me two little books. Olivia grows a charming girl—fall of feeling, and thinner than she was; but I have not time to fall in love.

"Mary presents her *general compliments*. She keeps in fine health!"

Coleridge, during this visit, recommended Lamb to Mr. Daniel Stuart, then editor of the "Morning Post," as a writer of light articles, by which he might add something to an income then barely sufficient for the decent support of himself and his sister. It would seem, from his next letter to Manning, that he had made an offer to try his hand at some personal squibs, which, ultimately, was not accepted. Manning need not have feared that there would have been a particle of malice in them! Lamb afterward became a correspondent to the paper, and has recorded his experience of the misery of toiling after pleasantries in one of the "Essays of Elia," entitled, "Newspapers thirty-five years ago."

TO MR. MANNING.

"C. L.'s moral sense presents her compliments to Doctor Manning, is very thankful for his medical advice, but is happy to add that her disorder has died of itself.

"Dr. Manning, Coleridge has left us to go into the north, on a visit to his god, Wordsworth. With him have flown all my splendid prospects of engagement with the 'Morning Post,' all my visionary guineas, the deceitful wages of unborn scandal. In truth, I wonder you took it up so seriously. All my intention was but to make a little sport with such public and fair game as Mr. Pitt, Mr Wilberforce, Mrs. F——, the devil, &c.—gentry dipped in Styx all over, whom no paper javelin-lings can touch. To have made free with these cattle, where was the harm? 'twould have been but giving a polish to lampblack, not nigrifying a negro primarily. After all, I cannot but regret my involuntary virtue. Hang virtue that's thrust upon us; it behaves itself with such constraint, till conscience opens the window and lets out the goose. I had struck off two imitations of Burton, quite abstracted from any modern allusions, which it was my intent only to engage in from time to time to make 'em popular.

"Stuart has got these, with an introductory letter; but, not hearing from him, I have ceased from my labours, but I write to him to-day to get a final answer. I am afraid they won't do for a paper. Burton is a scarce gentleman, not much known, else I had done 'em pretty well.

"I have also hit off a few lines in the name of Burton, being

a 'Conceit of Diabolic Possession.' Burton was a man often assailed by deepest melancholy, and at other times much given to laughing and jesting, as is the way with melancholy men. I will send them you: they were almost extempore, and no great things; but you will indulge them. Robert Lloyd is come to town. Priscilla meditates going to see Pizarro at Drury Lane to-night (from her uncle's), under cover of coming to dine with me . . *heu! tempora! heu! mores!* I have barely time to finish, as I expect her and Robin every minute.

"Yours as usual,

"C. L."

The following is an extract from a letter addressed about this time to Manning, who had taken a view of a personal matter relating to a common friend of both directly contrary to that of Lamb.

TO MR. MANNING.

"Rest you merry in your opinion! Opinion is a species of property; and though I am always desirous to share with my friend to a certain extent, I shall ever like to keep some tenets and some property properly my own. Some day, Manning, when we meet, substituting Croydon and fair Amaryllis for —— and ——, we will discuss together this question of moral feeling, 'In what cases, and how far sincerity is a virtue?' I do not mean 'Truth, a good Olivia-like creature, God bless her, who, meaning no offence, is always ready to give an answer when she is asked why she did so and so; but a certain forward-talking half-brother of hers, Sincerity, that amphibious gentleman, who is so ready to perk up his obnoxious sentiments unasked into your notice, as Midas would do his ears into your face uncalled for. But I despair of doing anything by a letter in the way of explaining or coming to explanations. A good wish, or a pun, or a piece of secret history, may be well enough that way conveyed; nay, it has been known that intelligence of a turkey hath been conveyed by that medium without much ambiguity. Godwin I am a good deal pleased with. He is a very well-behaved, pleasant man; nothing very brilliant about his conversation, or imposing, as you may suppose; quite another guess sort of gentleman from what your Anti-Jacobin Christians imagine him. I was well pleased to find he has neither horns nor claws; quite a tame creature, I assure you. A middle-sized man in stature; whereas, from his noisy fame, you would expect to find a Briareus Centimanus, or a Tityus tall enough to pull Jupiter from his heavens.

"Pray, is it a part of your sincerity to show my letters to

Lloyd? for, really, gentlemen ought to explain their virtues upon a first acquaintance, to prevent mistakes.

"God bless you, Manning. Take my trifling *as trifling;* and believe me, seriously and deeply,

"Your well-wisher and friend,

"C. L."

The following letter was addressed to Coleridge shortly after he had left London on a visit to Wordsworth, who, in the mean time, had settled on the borders of Grasmere.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"Dear Coleridge—I have taken to-day, and delivered to L. & Co., imprimis, your books, viz., three ponderous German dictionaries, one volume (I can find no more) of German and French ditto, sundry other German books unbound, as you left them, 'Percy's Ancient Poetry,' and one volume of 'Anderson's Poets.' I specify them, that you may not lose any. *Secundo,* a dressing-gown (value fivepence) in which you used to sit and look like a conjurer when you were translating Wallenstein. A case of two razors, and a shaving-box and strap. This it has cost me a severe struggle to part with. They are in a brown-paper parcel, which also contains sundry papers and poems, sermons, *some few Epic* Poems—one about Cain and Abel, which came from Poole, &c., &c., and also your tragedy, with one or two small German books, and that drama in which Got-fader performs Tertio; a small oblong box containing *all your letters,* collected from all your waste papers, and which fill the said little box. All other waste papers, which I judged worth sending, are in the paper-parcel aforesaid. But you will find *all* your letters in the box by themselves. Thus have I discharged my conscience and my lumber-room of all your property, save and except a folio entitled 'Tyrrell's Bibliotheca Politica,' which you used to learn your politics out of when you wrote for the 'Post,' *mutatis mutandis, i. e.,* applying past inferences to modern *data.* I retain that, because I am sensible I am very deficient in the politics myself; and I have torn up—don't be angry, waste paper has risen forty per cent., and I can't afford to buy it—all 'Bonaparte's Letters,' 'Arthur Young's Treatise on Corn,' and one or two more light-armed infantry, which I thought better suited the flippancy of London discussion than the dignity of Keswick thinking. Mary says you will be in a passion about them when you come to miss them; but you must study philosophy. Read 'Albertus Magnus de Chartis Amissis' five times over after phlebotomizing—'tis Burton's recipe—and

then be angry with an absent friend if you can. Sara is obscure. Am I to understand by her letter that she sends a *kiss* to Eliza B——? Pray tell your wife that a note of interrogation on the superscription of a letter is highly ungrammatical—she proposes writing my name *Lamb?* Lambe is quite enough. I have had the Anthology, and like only one thing in it, *Lewti;* but of that the last stanza is detestable, the rest most exquisite! the epithet *enviable* would dash the finest poem. For God's sake (I never was more serious), don't make me ridiculous any more by terming me gentle-hearted in print, or do it in better verses. It did well enough five years ago when I came to see you, and was moral coxcomb enough at the time you wrote the lines to feed upon such epithets; but, besides that, the meaning of gentle is equivocal at best, and almost always means poor-spirited; the very quality of gentleness is abhorrent to such vile trumpetings. My *sentiment* is long since vanished. I hope my *virtues* have done *sucking.* I can scarce think but you meant it in joke. I hope you did, for I should be ashamed to think you could think to gratify me by such praise, fit only to be a cordial to some green-sick sonneteer.*

"I have hit off the following in imitation of old English poetry, which, I imagine, I am a dab at. The measure is unmeasurable; but it most resembles that beautiful ballad the Old and Young Courtier; and in its features of taking the extremes of two situations for just parallel, it resembles the old poetry certainly. If I could but stretch out the circumstances to twelve more verses, *i. e.*, if I had as much genius as the writer of that old song, I think it would be excellent. It was to follow an imitation of Burton in prose, which you have not seen. But fate 'and wisest Stewart' say No.†

"I can send you two hundred pens and six quires of paper *immediately*, if they will answer the carriage by coach. It would be foolish to pack 'em up *cum multis libris et cæteris*—they would all spoil. I only wait your commands to coach them. I would pay five-and-forty thousand carriages to read W.'s tragedy, of which I have heard so much and seen so lit-

* This refers to a poem of Coleridge's, composed in 1797, and published in the Anthology of the year 1800, under the title of "This Lime-tree Bower my Prison," addressed to "Charles Lamb, of the India House, London," in which Lamb is thus apostrophized, as taking more pleasure in the country than Coleridge's other visiters—a compliment which even then he scarcely merited:—

"But thou, methinks most glad,
My gentle-hearted Charles! For thou hast pined
And linger'd after nature many a year,
In the great city pent."

† The quaint and pathetic poem, entitled "A Ballad, noticing the difference of rich and poor, in the ways of a rich noble's palace and a poor workhouse."

tle—only what I saw at Stowey. Pray give me an order in writing on Longman for 'Lyrical Ballads.' I have the first volume, and, truth to tell, six shillings is a broad shot. I cram all I can in to save a multiplying of letters—those pretty comets with swinging tails.

"I'll just crowd in God bless you!

Wednesday night, 6th Aug., 1800."

"John Woodvil" was now printed, although not published till a year afterward; probably withheld in the hope of its representation on the stage. A copy was sent to Coleridge for Wordsworth, with the following letter, or cluster of letters, written at several times. The ladies referred to in the exquisite description of Coleridge's blue-stocking friends are beyond the reach of feeling its application; nor will it be detected by the most apprehensive of their surviving friends.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"I send you, in this parcel, my play, which I beg you to present, in my name, with my respect and love, to Wordsworth and his sister. You blame us for giving your direction to Miss W——; the woman has been ten times after us about it, and we gave it her at last, under the idea that no further harm would ensue; but she would *once* write to you, and you would bite your lips, and forget to answer it, and so it would end. You read us a dismal homily upon 'Realities.' We know, quite as well as you do, what are shadows and what are realities. You, for instance, when you are over your fourth or fifth jorum, chirping about old school occurrences, are the best of realities. Shadows are cold, thin things, that have no warmth or grasp in them. Miss W——, and her friend, and a tribe of authoresses that come after you here daily, and, in defect of you, hive and cluster upon us, are the shadows. You encouraged that mopsey, Miss W——, to dance after you, in the hope of having her nonsense put into a nonsensical Anthology. We have pretty well shaken her off by that simple expedient of referring her to you; but there are more burs in the wind. I came home t'other day from business, hungry as a hunter, to dinner, with nothing, I am sure, of *the author but hunger* about me, and whom found I closeted with Mary but a friend of this Miss W——, one Miss B——e, or B——y, I don't know how she spells her name. I just came in time enough, I believe, luckily, to prevent them from exchanging vows of eternal friendship. It seems she is one of your authoresses, that you first foster, and then upbraid us with. But I forgive you. 'The rogue has given me potions to make me

love him.' Well; go she would not, nor step a step over our threshold, till we had promised to come and drink tea with her next night. I had not seen her before, and could not tell who it was that was so familiar. We went, however, not to be impolite. Her lodgings are up two flights of stairs in —— street. Tea and coffee, and macaroons—a kind of cake which I much love. We sat down. Presently Miss B—— broke the silence by declaring herself quite of a different opinion from *D'Israeli*, who supposes the differences of human intellect to be the mere effect of organization. She begged to know my opinion. I attempted to carry it off with a pun upon organ, but that went off very flat. She immediately conceived a very low opinion of my metaphysics; and, turning round to Mary, put some question to her in French—possibly having heard that neither Mary nor I understood French. The explanation that took place occasioned some embarrassment and much wondering. She then fell into an insulting conversation about the comparative genius and merits of all modern languages, and concluded with asserting that the Saxon was esteemed the purest dialect in Germany. From thence she passed into the subject of poetry; where I, who had hitherto sat mute, and a hearer only, humbly hoped I might now put in a word to some advantage, seeing that it was my own trade in a manner. But I was stopped by a round assertion that no good poetry had appeared since Dr. Johnson's time. It seems the doctor had suppressed many hopeful geniuses that way, by the severity of his critical strictures in his 'Lives of the Poets.' I here ventured to question the fact, and was beginning to appeal to *names*, but I was assured 'it was certainly the case.' Then we discussed Miss More's book on education, which I had never read. It seems Dr. Gregory, another of Miss B——'s friends, has found fault with one of Miss More's metaphors. Miss More has been at some pains to vindicate herself; in the opinion of Miss B——, not without success. It seems the doctor is invariably against the use of broken or mixed metaphor, which he reprobates, against the authority of Shakspeare himself. We next discussed the question whether Pope was a poet. I find Dr. Gregory is of opinion he was not, though Miss Seward does not at all concur with him in this. We then sat upon the comparative merits of the ten translations of 'Pizarro,' and Miss B—— advised Mary to take two of them home; she thought it might afford her some pleasure to compare them *verbatim:* which we declined. It being now nine o'clock, wine and macaroons were again served round, and we parted, with a promise to go again next week, and meet the Misses Porter, who, it seems, have heard

much of Mr. Coleridge, and wish to meet *us*, because we are *his* friends. I have been preparing for the occasion. I crowd cotton in my ears. I read all the reviews and magazines of the past month against the dreadful meeting, and I hope by these means to cut a tolerable second-rate figure.

"Pray let us have no more complaints about shadows. We are in a fair way, *through you*, to surfeit sick upon them.

"Our loves and respects to your host and hostess.

"Take no thought about your proof-sheets; they shall be done as if Woodfall himself did them. Pray send us word of Mrs. Coleridge and little David Hartley, your little reality.

"Farewell, dear Substance. Take no umbrage at anything I have written.

"C. LAMB.

"*Umbra.*

"Land of Shadows,
Shadow-month the 16th or 17th, 1800."

"Coleridge, I find loose among your papers a copy of Christabel. It wants about thirty lines; you will very much oblige me by sending the beginning as far as that line—

'And the spring comes slowly up this way;'

and the intermediate lines between—

'The lady leaps up suddenly,
The lovely Lady Christabel;'

and the lines—

'She folded her arms beneath her cloak,
And stole to the other side of the oak.'

The trouble to you *will be small*, and the benefit to us *very great!* A pretty antithesis! A figure in speech I much applaud.

"Godwin has called upon us. He spent one evening here. Was very friendly. Kept us up till midnight. Drank punch, and talked about you. He seems, above all men, mortified at your going away. Suppose you were to write to that good-natured heathen;

'Or is he a *shadow?*'

"If I do not *write*, impute it to the long postage, of which you have so much cause to complain. I have scribbled over a *queer letter*, as I find by perusal, but it means no mischief.

"I am, and will be, yours ever, in sober sadness,

"C. L.

"Write your *German* as plain as sunshine, for that must correct itself. You know I am homo unius linguæ; in English, illiterate, a dunce, a ninny."

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"How do you like this little epigram? It is not my writing, nor had I any finger in it. If you concur with me in thinking it very elegant and very original, I shall be tempted to name the author to you. I will just hint that it is almost or quite a first attempt.

[Here Miss Lamb's little poem of Helen was introduced.]

"By-the-by, I have a sort of recollection that somebody, I think *you*, promised me a sight of Wordsworth's tragedy. I should be very glad of it just now; for I have got Manning with me, and should like to read it *with him*. But this, I confess, is a refinement. Under any circumstances, alone, in Cold-Bath prison, or in the desert island, just when Prospero and his crew had set off, with Caliban in a cage, to Milan, it would be a treat to me to read that play. Manning has read it, so has Lloyd, and all Lloyd's family; but I could not get him to betray his trust by giving *me* a sight of it. Lloyd is sadly deficient in some of those virtuous vices.

* * * * * *

"George Dyer is the only literary character I am happily acquainted with. The oftener I see him the more deeply I admire him. He is goodness itself. If I could but calculate the precise date of his death, I would write a novel on purpose to make George the hero. I could hit him off to a hair."

The tragedy which Lamb was thus anxious to read has been perseveringly withheld from the world. A fine passage, quoted in one of Wordsworth's prose essays, make us share in his earnest curiosity.

"Action is momentary—
A word, a blow—the motion of a muscle this way or that;
Suffering is long, drear, and infinite."

Wordsworth's genius is perhaps more fitly employed in thus tracing out the springs of heroic passion, and developing the profound elements of human character, than in following them out through their exhibition in violent contest or majestic repose. Surely he may *now* afford to gratify the world!

The next is a short but characteristic letter to Manning.

TO MR. MANNING.

"My dear fellow (N. B. mighty familiar of late!), for me to come to Cambridge now is one of Heaven's impossibilities. Metaphysicians tell us, even it can work nothing which implies a contradiction. I can explain this by telling you that I

am engaged to do double duty (this hot weather!) for a man who has taken advantage of this very weather to go and cool himself in 'green retreats' all the month of August.

"But for you to come to London instead! muse upon it, revolve it, cast it about in your mind. I have a bed at your command. You shall drink rum, brandy, gin, aquavitæ, usquebaugh, or whiskey a' nights; and for the after dinner-trick I have eight bottles of genuine port, which, mathematically divided, gives one and one seventh for every day you stay, provided you stay a week. Hear John Milton sing,

'Let Euclid rest and Archimedes pause.'
Twenty-first Sonnet.

And elsewhere,

'What neat repast shall feast us, light* and choice,
Of Attic taste, with wine,† whence we may rise,
To hear the lute well touch'd, or artful voice
Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air?'

"Indeed, the poets are full of this pleasing mortality—

'Veni cite, Domine Manning!'

"Think upon it. Excuse the paper, it is all I have.

"C. LAMB."

Lamb now meditated a removal to the home-place of his best and most solemn thoughts—the Temple; and thus announced it in a letter to Manning.

TO MR. MANNING.

"You masters of logic ought to know (logic is nothing more than a knowledge of *words*, as the Greek etymon implies) that all words are no more to be taken in a literal sense at all times than a promise given to a tailor. When I expressed an apprehension that you were mortally offended, I meant no more than by the application of a certain formula of efficacious sounds, which had *done* in similar cases before, to rouse a sense of decency in you, and a remembrance of what was due to me! You masters of logic should advert to this phenomenon in human speech before you arraign the usage of us dramatic geniuses. Imagination is a good blood-mare, and goes well; but the misfortune is, she has too many paths before her. 'Tis true, I might have imaged to myself that you had trundled your frail carcass to Norfolk. I might also and did imagine that you had not, but that you were lazy, or inventing new properties in a triangle, and for that purpose

* "We poets! generally give *light* dinners."
† "No doubt the poet here alludes to port-wine at 38*s.* the dozen."

moulding and squeezing Landlord Crisp's three-cornered beaver into fantastic experimental forms; or, that Archimedes was meditating to repulse the French, in case of a Cambridge invasion, by a geometric hurling of folios on their red caps; or, peradventure, that you were in extremities, in great wants, and just set out for Trinity-boys when my letters came. In short, my genius! (which is a short word nowadays for what-a-great-man-am-I!) was absolutely stifled and overlaid with its own riches. Truth is one and poor, like the cruise of Elijah's widow. Imagination is the bold face that multiplies its oil; and thou, the old cracked pipkin, that could not believe it could be put to such purposes. Dull pipkin, to have Elijah for thy cook. Imbecile recipient of so fat a miracle. I send you George Dyer's Poems, the richest production of the lyrical muse *this century* can boast; for Wordsworth's L. B. were published, or at least written, before Christmas.

"Please to advert to pages 291 to 276 for the most astonishing account of where Shakspeare's muse has been all this while. I thought she had been dead, and buried in Stratford Church, with the young man *that kept her company*—

'But it seems, like the devil,
Buried in Cole Harbour,
Some say she's risen again,
Gone 'prentice to a barber.'

"N.B.—I don't charge anything for the additional manuscript notes, which are the joint productions of myself and a learned translator of Schiller, —— Stoddart, Esq.

"N.B. the 2d.—I should not have blotted your book, but I had sent my own out to be bound, as I was in duty bound. A liberal criticism upon the several pieces, lyrical, heroical, amatory, and satirical, would be acceptable. So some think there's not a Words—worth of good poetry in the great L. B.! I daren't put the dreaded syllables at their just length, for my *back* tingles from the northern castigation.

"I am going to change my lodgings, having received a hint that it would be agreeable, at our Lady's next feast. I have partly fixed upon most delectable rooms, which look out (when you stand a tiptoe) over the Thames and Surrey Hills, at the upper end of King's Bench walks, in the Temple. There I shall have all the privacy of a house without the encumbrance, and shall be able to lock my friends out as often as I desire to hold free converse with my immortal mind, for my present lodgings resemble a minister's levee, I have so increased my acquaintance (as they call 'em) since I resided in town. Like the town mouse, that had tasted a little of urbane manners, I long to be nibbling my own cheese by my dear

self, without mousetraps and timetraps. By my new plan I shall be as airy, up four pair of stairs, as in the country; and in a garden, in the midst of enchanting, more than Mohammedan paradise, London, whose dirtiest drab-frequented alley, and her lowest bowing tradesman, I would not exchange for Skiddaw, Helvellyn, James, Walter, and the parson into the bargain. Oh! her lamps of a night! her rich goldsmiths, printshops, toyshops, mercers, hardwaremen, pastrycooks! St. Paul's churchyard, the Strand! Exeter Change! Charing Cross, with the man *upon* a black horse! These are thy gods, oh London! An't you mightily moped on the banks of the Cam? Had you not better come and set up here? You can't think what a difference. All the streets and pavements are pure gold, I warrant you. At least, I know an alchymy that turns her mud into that metal—a mind that loves to be at home in crowds.

"'Tis half past twelve o'clock, and all sober people ought to be abed.

"C. LAMB (as you may guess)."

The following letters appear to have been written during Coleridge's visit to Wordsworth.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"By some fatality, unusual with me, I have mislaid the list of books which you want. Can you, from memory, easily supply me with another?

"I confess to Statius, and I detained him wilfully, out of a reverend regard to your style. Statius, they tell me, is turgid. As to that other Latin book, since you know neither its name nor subject, your wants (I crave leave to apprehend) cannot be very urgent. Meanwhile, dream that it is one of the lost Decades of Livy.

"Your particularity to me has led you to form an erroneous opinion as to the measure of delight you suppose me to take in obliging. Pray be careful that it spread no farther. 'Tis one of those heresies that is very pregnant. Pray rest more satisfied with the portion of learning which you have got, and disturb my peaceful ignorance as little as possible with such sort of commissions.

"Did you never observe an appearance well known by the name of the man in the moon? Some scandalous old maids have set on foot a report that it is Endymion.

"Your theory about the first awkward step a man makes being the consequence of learning to dance, is not universal. We have known many youths bred up in Christ's who *never learned* to dance, yet the world imputes to them no

very graceful motions. I remember there was little Hudson, the immortal precentor of St. Paul's, to teach us our quavers; but, to the best of my recollection, there was no master of motions when we were at Christ's.

"Farewell, in haste. "C. L."

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

"Dear Wordsworth—I have not forgot your commissions. But the truth is—and why should I not confess it?—I am not plethorically abounding in cash at this present. Merit, Heaven knows, is very little rewarded; but it does not become me to speak of myself. My motto is, 'contented with little, yet wishing for more.' Now the books you wish for would require some pounds, which, I am sorry to say, I have not by me; so I will say at once, if you will give me a draught upon your town banker for any sum you propose to lay out, I will dispose of it to the very best of my skill in choice old books, such as my own soul loveth. In fact, I have been waiting for the liquidation of a debt to enable myself to set about your commission handsomely; for it is a scurvy thing to cry, 'Give me the money first,' and I am the first of the family of the Lambs that have done it for many centuries; but the debt remains as it was, and my old friend that I accommodated has generously forgot it! The books which you want I calculate at about £8. Ben Jonson is a guinea book. Beaumont and Fletcher, in folio, the right folio not now to be met with; the octavoes are about £3. As to any other dramatists, I do not know where to find them, except what are in Dodsley's old plays, which are about £3 also. Massinger I never saw but at one shop, but it is now gone; but one of the editions of Dodsley contains about a fourth (the best) of his plays. Congreve, and the rest of King Charles's moralists, are cheap and accessible. The works on Ireland I will inquire after, but I fear Spenser's is not to be had apart from his poems; I never saw it. But you may depend upon my sparing no pains to furnish you as complete a library of old poets and dramatists as will be prudent to buy; for I suppose you do include the £20 edition of Hamlet, single play, which Kemble has. Marlow's plays and poems are totally vanished; only one edition of Dodsley retains one, and the other two of his plays; but John Ford is the man after Shakspeare. Let me know your will and pleasure soon, for I have observed, next to the pleasure of buying a bargain for one's self is the pleasure of persuading a friend to buy it. It tickles one with the image of an imprudency, without the penalty usually annexed.

"C. LAMB."

CHAPTER VI.

[1800.]

Letters to Manning, after Lamb's removal to the Temple.

In the year 1800, Lamb carried into effect his purpose of removing to Mitre-court Buildings, Temple. During this time he wrote only a few small poems, which he transmitted to Manning. In his letters to Manning a vein of wild humour breaks out, of which there are but slight indications in the correspondence with his more sentimental friends; as if the very opposition of Manning's more scientific power to his own force of sympathy provoked the sallies which the genial kindness of the mathematician fostered. The prodigal and reckless humour of some of these letters forms a striking contrast to the deep feeling of the earlier letters to Coleridge. His 'Essays of Elia' show the harmonious union of both. The following letter contains Lamb's description of his new abode.

TO MR. MANNING.

"I was not aware that you owed me anything besides that guinea; but I dare say you are right. I live at No. 16 Mitre-court Buildings, a pistol-shot off Baron Maseres.' You must introduce me to the baron. I think we should suit one another mainly. He lives on the ground floor, for convenience of the gout; I prefer the attic story, for the air! He keeps three footmen and two maids; I have neither maid nor laundress, not caring to be troubled with them! His forte, I understand, is the higher mathematics; my turn, I confess, is more to poetry and the belles lettres. The very antithesis of our characters would make up a harmony. You must bring the baron and me together. N.B. when you come to see me, mount up to the top of the stairs—I hope you are not asthmatical—and come in flannel, for it's pure airy up there. And bring your glass, and I will show you the Surrey Hills. My bed faces the river, so as by perking up upon my haunches, and supporting my carcass with my elbows, without much wrying my neck, I can see the white sails glide by the bottom of the King's Bench walks as I lie in my bed. An excellent tiptoe prospect in the best room; casement windows, with small panes, to look more like a cottage. Mind, I have got no

bed for you, that's flat; sold it to pay expenses of moving. The very bed on which Manning lay; the friendly, the mathematical Manning! How forcibly does it remind me of the interesting Otway! 'The very bed which on thy marriage night gave thee into the arms of Belvidera, by the coarse hand of ruffians' (upholsterers' men), &c. My tears will not give me leave to go on. But a bed I will get you, Manning, on condition you will be my day guest.

"I have been ill more than a month with a bad cold, which comes upon me (like a murderer's conscience) about midnight, and vexes me for many hours. I have successively been drugged with Spanish licorice, opium, ipecacuanha, paregoric, and tincture of foxglove (tinctura purpuræ digitalis of the ancients). I am afraid I must leave off drinking."

* * * * * *

Lamb then gives an account of his visit to an exhibition of snakes—of a frightful vividness and interesting—as all details of these fascinating reptiles are, which we at once loathe and long to look upon, as the old enemies and tempters of our race.

TO MR. MANNING.

"Dear Manning—Had you written one week before you did, I certainly should have obeyed your injunction; you should have seen me before my letter. I will explain to you my situation. There are six of us in one department. Two of us (within these four days) are confined with severe fevers; and two more, who belong to the Tower Militia, expect to have marching orders on Friday. Now six are absolutely necessary. I have already asked and obtained two young hands to supply the loss of the *feverites;* and, with the other prospect before me, you may believe I cannot decently ask leave of absence for myself. All I can promise (and I do promise, with the sincerity of Saint Peter, and the contrition of sinner Peter if I fail) that I will come *the very first spare week*, and go nowhere till I have been at Cambridge. No matter if you are in a state of pupilage when I come; for I can employ myself in Cambridge very pleasantly in the mornings. Are there not libraries, halls, colleges, books, pictures, statues? I wish you had made London in your way. There is an exhibition quite uncommon in Europe, which could not have escaped *your genius*—a live rattlesnake, ten feet in length, and the thickness of a big leg. I went to see it last night by candlelight. We were ushered into a room very little bigger than ours at Pentonville. A man and woman and four boys live in this room, joint tenants with nine snakes, most of them such

as no remedy has been discovered for their bite. We walked into the middle, which is formed by a half-moon of wired boxes, all mansions of *snakes*—whip-snakes, thunder-snakes, pie-nose-snakes, American vipers, and *this monster*. He lies curled up in folds; and, immediately a stranger enters (for he is used to the family, and sees them play at cards), he sets up a rattle like a watchman's in London, or near as loud, and reared up a head, from the midst of these folds, like a toad, and shook his head, and showed every sign a snake can show of irritation. I had the foolish curiosity to strike the wires with my finger, and the devil flew at me with his toad-mouth wide open: the inside of his mouth is quite white. I had got my finger away, nor could he well have bit me with his big mouth, which would have been certain death in five minutes. But it frightened me so much that I did not recover my voice for a minute's space. I forgot, in my fear, that he was secured. You would have forgot too, for 'tis incredible how such a monster can be confined in small gauzy-looking wires. I dreamed of snakes in the night. I wish to Heaven you could see it. He absolutely swelled with passion to the bigness of a large thigh. I could not retreat without infringing on another box, and just behind, a little devil, not an inch from my back, had got his nose out, with some difficulty and pain, quite through the bars! He was soon taught better manners. All the snakes were curious, and objects of terror; but this monster, like Aaron's serpent, swallowed up the impression of the rest. He opened his cursed mouth when he made at me as wide as his head was broad. I hallooed out quite loud, and felt pains all over my body with the fright.

"I have had the felicity of hearing George Dyer read out one book of 'The Farmer's Boy.' I thought it rather childish. No doubt there is originality in it (which, in your self-taught geniuses, is a most rare quality, they generally getting hold of some bad models, in a scarcity of books, and forming their taste on them), but no *selection*. *All* is described.

"Mind, I have only heard read one book.

"Yours sincerely,

"Philo-Snake,

"C. L."

The following are fragments from a letter chiefly on personal matters, the interest of which is gone by:—

TO MR. MANNING.

"And now, when shall I catch a glimpse of your honest face-to-face countenance again? Your fine *dogmatical, skepti-*

cal face by punch-light? Oh! one glimpse of the human face, and shake of the human hand, is better than whole reams of this cold, thin correspondence; yea, of more worth than all the letters that have sweated the fingers of sensibility from Madame Sévigné to Sterne and Shenstone.

"Coleridge is settled with his wife and the young philosopher at Keswick, with the Wordsworths. They have contrived to spawn a new volume of lyrical ballads, which is to see the light in about a month, and causes no little excitement in the *literary world*. George Dyer, too, that good-natured poet, is more than nine months gone with his twin volumes of ode, pastoral, sonnet, elegy, Spenserian, Horatian, Akensidish, and Masonic verse; Clio prosper the birth! it will be twelve shillings out of somebody's pocket. Well, God put it into the hearts of the English gentry to come in shoals and subscribe to his poems, for he never put a kinder heart into flesh of man than George Dyer's!

"Now farewell, for dinner is at hand.

"C. L."

Lamb had engaged to spend a few days, when he could obtain leave, with Manning at Cambridge, and, just as he hoped to accomplish his wish, received an invitation from Lloyd to give his holyday to the poets assembled at the Lakes. In the joyous excitement of spirits which the anticipated visit to Manning produced, he thus plays off Lloyd's proposal on his friend, abuses mountains, and luxuriates in his love of London:—

TO MR. MANNING.

"Dear Manning—I have received a very kind invitation from Lloyd and Sophia to go and spend a month with them at the lakes. Now it fortunately happens (which is so seldom the case!) that I have spare cash by me, enough to answer the expenses of so long a journey; and I am determined to get away from the office by some means. The purpose of this letter is to request of you (my dear friend), that you will not take it unkind if I decline my proposed visit to Cambridge *for the present*. Perhaps I shall be able to take Cambridge *in my way*, going or coming. I need not describe to you the expectations which such a one as myself, pent up all my life in a dirty city, have formed of a tour to the lakes. Consider, Grassmere! Ambleside! Wordsworth! Coleridge! Hills, woods, lakes, and mountains, to the eternal devil. I will eat snipes with thee, Thomas Manning. Only confess, confess a *bite*.

"P.S. I think you named the 16th; but was it not mod-

est of Lloyd to send such an invitation! It shows his knowledge of *money* and *time*. I would be loath to think he meant

'Ironic satire sidelong sklented on my poor pursie.'
BURNS.

For my part, with reference to my friends northward, I am not romance-bit about *Nature*. The earth, and sea, and sky (when all is said) is but as a house to dwell in. If the inmates be courteous, and good liquors flow like the conduits at an old coronation, if they can talk sensibly and feel properly, I have no need to stand staring upon the gilded looking-glass (that strained my friend's purse-strings in the purchase), nor his five-shilling print over the mantelpiece of old Nabbs the carrier (which only betrays his false taste). Just as important to me (in a sense) is all the furniture of my world; eye-pampering, but satisfies no heart. Streets, streets, streets, markets, theatres, churches, Covent Gardens, shops sparkling with pretty faces of industrious milliners, neat seamstresses, ladies cheapening, gentlemen behind counters lying, authors in the streets with spectacles (you may know them by their gait), lamps lighted at night, pastrycook and silversmith shops, beautiful Quakers of Pentonville, noise of coaches, drowsy cry of mechanic watchmen at night, with bucks reeling home drunk; if you happen to wake at midnight, cries of fire; and stop thief; inns of court, with their learned air, and halls, and butteries, just like Cambridge colleges; old bookstalls, 'Jeremy Taylors,' 'Burtons on Melancholy,' and 'Religio Medicis' on every stall. These are thy pleasures, oh London! with-the-many-sins. Oh city, abounding in ——, for these may Keswick and her giant brood go hang!

"C. L."

On this occasion Lamb was disappointed; but he was consoled by the acquisition of a new friend in Mr. Rickman, of the House of Commons, and exults in a strain which he never had reason to regret. This piece of rare felicity enabled him even to bear the loss of his manuscripts and the delay of his hopes; which, according to the old theatrical usage, he was destined to endure.

TO MR. MANNING.

"*Enquid meditatur Archimedes?* What is Euclid doing? What hath happened to learned Trismegist? Doth he take it in ill part that his humble friend did not comply with his courteous invitation? Let it suffice, I could not come; are impossibilities nothing? be they abstractions of the intellect? or not (rather) most sharp and mortifying realities? nuts in

the Will's mouth too hard for her to crack? brick and stone walls in her way, which she can by no means eat through? sore lets, *impedimenta viarum*, no thoroughfares? *racemi nimium alte pendentes?* Is the phrase classic? I allude to the grapes in Æsop, which cost the fox a strain, and gained the world an aphorism. Observe the superscription of this letter. In adapting the size of the letters which constitute *your* name and Mr. *Crisp's* name respectively, I had an eye to your different stations in life. 'Tis truly curious, and must be soothing to an *aristocrat*. I wonder it has never been hit on before my time. I have made an acquisition lately of a *pleasant hand*, one Rickman, to whom I was introduced by ——, not the most flattering auspices under which one man can be introduced to another; George brings all sorts of people together, setting up a sort of agrarian law or common property in matter of society; but, for once, he has done me a great pleasure, while he was only pursuing a principle, as *ignes fatui may* light you home. This Rickman lives in our buildings, immediately opposite our house; the finest fellow to drop in a' nights, about nine or ten o'clock—cold bread and cheese time—just in the *wishing* time of the night, when you *wish* for somebody to come in, without a distinct idea of a probable anybody. Just in the nick, neither too early to be tedious nor too late to sit a reasonable time. He is a most pleasant hand; a fine, rattling fellow; has gone through life laughing at solemn apes; himself hugely literate, oppressively full of information in all stuff of conversation, from matter of fact to Xenophon and Plato; can talk Greek with Porson, politics with Thelwall, conjecture with George Dyer, nonsense with me, and anything with anybody; a great farmer, somewhat concerned in an agricultural magazine; reads no poetry but Shakspeare, very intimate with Southey; loves George Dyer; thoroughly penetrates into the ridiculous, wherever found; understands the *first time* (a great desideratum in common minds), you need never twice speak to him; does not want explanations, translations, limitations, as Professor Godwin does when you make an assertion; *up* to anything; *down* to everything; whatever *sapit hominem*. A perfect *man*. All this farrago, which must perplex you to read, and has put me to a little trouble to *select!* only proves how impossible it is to describe a *pleasant hand*. You must see Rickman to know him, for he is a species in one. A new class. An exotic, any slip of which I am proud to put in my garden-pot. The clearest-headed fellow. Fullest of matter, with least verbosity. If there be any alloy in my fortune to have met with such a man, it is that he commonly divides his time between town

and country, having some foolish family ties at Christchurch, by which means he can only gladden our London hemisphere with returns of light. He is now going for six weeks.

"At last I have written to Kemble, to know the event of my play, which was presented last Christmas. As I suspected, came an answer back that the copy was lost, and could not be found; no hint that anybody had to this day ever looked into it; with a courteous (reasonable!) request of another copy (if I had one by me), and a promise of a definitive answer in a week. I could not resist so facile and moderate a demand, so scribbled out another, omitting sundry things, such as the witch story, about half of the forest scene (which is leisurely for story), and transposing that soliloquy about England getting drunk, which, like its reciter, stupidly stood alone, nothing prevenient or antevenient, and cleared away a good deal besides, and sent this copy, written *all out* (with alterations, &c., *requiring judgment*) in one day and a half! I sent it last night, and am in weekly expectation of the tolling bell and death-warrant.

"This is all my London news. Send me some from the *banks* of *Cam*, as the poets delight to speak, especially ——, who has no other name, nor idea, nor definition of Cambridge; namely, its being a market town, sending members to parliament, never entered into his definition; it was and is, simply, the banks of the Cam, or the fair Cam; as Oxford is the banks of the Isis, or the fair Isis. Yours in all humility, most illustrious Trismegist,

"C. LAMB.

("Read on, there's more at the bottom.)

"You ask me about the 'Farmer's Boy'—don't you think the fellow who wrote it (who is a shoemaker) has a poor mind? Don't you find he is always silly about *poor Giles* and those abject kind of phrases, which mark a man that look up to wealth? None of Burns's poet dignity. What do you think? I have just opened him, but he makes me sick."

Here is a short but characteristic instance of the humour of the time.

TO MR. MANNING.

"Dear Archimedes—Things have gone on badly with thy ungeometrical friend; but they are on the turn. My old housekeeper has showed signs of convalescence, and will shortly resume the power of the keys, so I shan't be cheated of my tea and liquors. Wind in the west, which promotes tranquillity.

Have leisure now to anticipate seeing thee again. Have been taking leave of tobacco in a rhyming address. Had thought *that vein* had long since closed up. Find I can rhyme and reason too. Think of studying mathematics, to restrain the fire of my genius, which G. D. recommends. Have frequent bleedings at the nose, which shows plethoric. Maybe shall try the sea myself, that great scene of wonders. Got incredibly sober and regular: shave oftener, and hum a tune, to signify cheerfulness and gallantry.

"Suddenly disposed to sleep, having taken a quart of peas with bacon, and stout. Will not refuse Nature, who has done such things for me!

"Nurse! don't call me unless Mr. Manning comes. What! the gentleman in spectacles? Yes.

"*Dormit.*

"C. L.

"Saturday,
"Hot Noon."

Constant to the fame of Jem White, Lamb did not fail to enlist Manning among the admirers of the "Falstaff's Letter." The next letter referring to them is, however, more interesting for the light which it casts on Lamb's indifference to the politics of the time and fond devotion to the past.

TO MR. MANNING.

"I hope by this time you are prepared to say the 'Falstaff's Letters' are a bundle of the sharpest, queerest, profoundest humours, of any these juice-drained latter times have spawned. I should have advertised you that the meaning is frequently hard to be got at; and so are the future guineas that now lie ripening and aurifying in the womb of some undiscovered Potosi; but dig, dig, dig, dig, Manning! I set to, with an unconquerable propulsion to write, with a lamentable want of what to write. My private goings on are orderly as the movements of the spheres, and stale as their music to angels' ears. Public affairs—except as they touch upon me, and so turn into private—I cannot whip up my mind to feel any interest in. I grieve, indeed, that War, and Nature, and Mr. Pitt, that hangs up in Lloyd's best parlour, should have conspired to call up three necessaries, simple commoners as our fathers knew them, into the upper house of luxuries; bread, and beer, and coals, Manning. But as to France and Frenchmen, and the Abbé Sièyes and his constitutions, I cannot make these present times present to me. I read histories of the past, and I live in them; although, to abstract senses, they are far less momentous than

the noises which keep Europe awake. I am reading 'Burnet's own Times.' Did you ever read that garrulous, pleasant history? He tells his story like an old man past political service, bragging to his sons on winter evenings of the part he took in public transactions when 'his old cap was new.' Full of scandal, which all true history is. No palliatives, but all the stark wickedness that actually gives the *momentum* to national actors. Quite the prattle of age and outlived importance. Truth and sincerity staring out upon you perpetually in *alto relievo*. Himself a party-man, he makes you a party-man. None of the cursed philosophical Humeian indifference, so cold, and unnatural, and inhuman! None of the cursed Gibbonian fine writing, so fine and composite. None of Dr. Robertson's periods with three members. None of Mr. Roscoe's sage remarks, all so apposite, and coming in so clever, lest the reader should have had the trouble of drawing an inference. Burnet's good old prattle I can bring present to my mind; I can make the revolution present to me—the French revolution, by a converse perversity in my nature, I fling as far *from* me. To leave this tiresome subject, and to relieve you from two or three dismal yawns, which I hear in spirit, I here conclude my more than commonly obtuse letter; dull, up to the dulness of a Dutch commentator on Shakspeare.

"My love to Loyd and to Sophia.

"C. L."

While Lamb's dramatic destinies were in suspense, he was called on "to assist" at the production of a tragedy, by a friend, whose more mature reputation gave him readier access to the manager, but who had no better claim to success than himself. Mr. Godwin, whose powerful romance of Caleb Williams had supplied the materials for "The Iron Chest" of Colman, naturally aspired, on his own account, to the glory of the scene, and completed a tragedy under the title of "Antonio, or the Soldier's Return," which was accepted at Drury Lane Theatre, and announced for representation on Saturday, the 13th December, in this year. Lamb supplied the epilogue, which he copied in the following letter addressed to Manning on the eventful day:—

TO MR. MANNING.

"I have received your letter *this moment*, not having been at the office. I have just time to scribble down the epilogue. To your last epistle I will just reply, that I will certainly come to Cambridge before January is out: I'll come *when I can*. You shall have an emended copy of my play early next week.

Mary thanks you; but her handwriting is too feminine to be exposed to a Cambridge gentleman, though I endeavour to persuade her that you understand algebra, and must understand her hand. The play is the man's you wot of; but, for Heaven's sake, do not mention it; it is to come out in a feigned name, as one Tobin's. I will omit the introductory lines which connect it with the play, and give you the concluding tale, which is the mass and bulk of the epilogue. The *name* is *Jack* INCIDENT. It is about promise-breaking; you will see it all if you read the *papers*.

Jack, of dramatic genius justly vain,
Purchased a renter's share at Drury Lane;
A prudent man in every other matter,
Known at his club-room for an honest hatter;
Humane and courteous, led a civil life,
And has been seldom known to beat his wife;
But Jack is now grown quite another man,
Frequents the green-room, knows the plot and plan
Of each new piece,
And has been seen to talk with Sheridan!
In at the playhouse just at six he pops,
And never leaves it till the curtain drops,
Is never absent on the *author's night*,
Knows actresses and actors too—by sight;
So humble, that with Suett he'll confer,
Or take a pipe with plain Jack Bannister;
Nay, with an author has been known so free,
He once suggested a catastrophe;
In short, John dabbled till his head was turn'd:
His wife remonstrated, his neighbours mourn'd,
His customers were dropping off apace,
And Jack's affairs began to wear a piteous face.
One night his wife began a curtain-lecture;
'My dearest Johnny, husband, spouse, protector,
Take pity on your helpless babes and me,
Save us from ruin, you from bankruptcy;
Look to your business, leave these cursed plays,
And try again your old industrious ways.'
Jack, who was always scared at the Gazette,
And had some bits of scull uninjured yet,
Promised amendment, vow'd his wife spake reason,
'He would not see another play that season.'
Three stubborn fortnights Jack his promise kept,
Was late and early in his shop, eat, slept,
And walk'd and talk'd, like ordinary men;
No *wit*, but John the hatter once again;
Visits his club: when lo! one *fatal night*
His wife with horror view'd the well-known sight—
John's *hat*, *wig*, *snuffbox*—well she knew his tricks—
And Jack decamping at the hour of six.
Just at the counter's edge a playbill lay,
Announcing that 'Pizarro' was the play;
'Oh Johnny, Johnny, this is your old doing.'
Quoth Jack, 'Why, what the devil storm's a-brewing?
About a harmless play why all this fright?
I'll go and see it, if it's but for spite;
Zounds, woman! Nelson's* to be there to-night.'

* "A good clap-trap. Nelson has exhibited two or three times at both theatres, and advertised himself."

"N.B.—This was intended for Jack Bannister to speak; but the sage managers have chosen Miss *Heard*, except Miss Tidswell, the worst actress ever seen *or heard*. Now I remember I have promised the loan of my play. I will lend it *instantly*, and you shall get it ('pon honour!) by this day week.

"I must go and dress for the boxes! First night! Finding I have time, I transcribe the rest. Observe, you have read the last first; it begins thus:—The names I took from a little outline G. gave me. I have not read the play!

Ladies, ye've seen how Guzman's consort died,
Poor victim of a Spaniard brother's pride,
When Spanish honour through the world was blown,
And Spanish beauty for the best was known.*
In that romantic, unenlightened time,
A *breach* of *promise*† was a sort of crime;
Which of you handsome English ladies here,
But deems the penance bloody and severe?
A whimsical old Saragossa‡ fashion,
That a dead father's dying inclination
Should *live* to thwart a living daughter's passion,◊
Unjustly on the sex *we*‖ men exclaim,
Rail at *your*¶ vices, and commit the same;
Man is a promise-breaker from the womb,
And goes a promise-breaker to the tomb;
What need we instance here the lover's vow,
The sick man's purpose, or the great man's bow?**
The truth by few examples best is shown,
Instead of many which are better known;
Take poor Jack Incident's that's dead and gone.
Jack, &c., &c., &c.

"Now you have it all—how do you like it? I am going to see it recited!!!"

Alas or human hopes! The play was decisively damned, and the epilogue shared its fate. The tragedy turned out a miracle of dulness for the world to wonder at, although Lamb always insisted it had one fine line, which he was fond of repeating—sole relic of the else forgotten play. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, the brother and sister of the drama, toiled through four acts and a half without applause or disapprobation; one speech was not more vapid than another; and so dead was the level of the dialogue, that, although its destiny was seen from afar, it presented no opportunity for hissing. But as the play drew towards a close, when, after a scene of frigid chiding not vivified by any fire of Kemble's own, Antonio drew his sword and plunged it into the heroine's bosom, the "sad civility" of the audience vanished, they started as at a real murder, and hooted the actors from the stage. "Philosophy,"

* "Four *easy* lines." † "For which the *heroine died*."
‡ "In *Spain!!*" ◊ "Two *neat* lines." ‖ "Or *you*."
¶ "Or *our*, as *they* have altered it." ** "Antithesis!!"

which could not "make a Juliet," sustained the author through the trial. He sat on one of the front benches of the pit, unmoved amid the storm. When the first act passed off without a hand, he expressed his satisfaction at the good sense of the house; "the proper season of applause had not arrived;" all was exactly as it should be. The second act proceeded to its close in the same uninterrupted calm; his friends became uneasy, but still his optimism prevailed; he could afford to wait. And though he did at last admit the great movement was somewhat tardy, and that the audience seemed rather patient than interested, he did not lose his confidence till the tumult arose, and then he submitted with quiet dignity to the fate of genius, too lofty to be understood by a world as yet in its childhood! Notwithstanding this rude repulse, Mr. Godwin retained his taste for the theatre to the last. On every first night of a new piece, whether tragedy, comedy, or farce, whether of friend or foe, he sat with gentle interest in a side box, and bore its fate, whatever it might be, with resignation, as he had done his own. The following is Lamb's account of the catastrophe rendered to Manning, in which the facetious charge against the unlucky author of "Violent and Satanical Pride of Heart" has reference to some banter which Lamb had encountered among his friends by the purposed title of his own play, "Pride's Cure," and his disquisition in its defence.

TO MR. MANNING.

"We are damned! Not the facetious epilogue itself could save us. For, as the editor of the Morning Post, quick-sighted gentleman! hath this morning truly observed (I beg pardon if I falsify his *words*, their profound *sense* I am sure I retain), both prologue and epilogue were worthy of accompanying such a piece; and, indeed (mark the profundity, Mister Manning), were received with proper indignation by such of the audience only as thought either worth attending to. Professor, thy glories wax dim! Again, the incomparable author of the True Briton declareth in *his* paper (bearing same date) that the epilogue was an indifferent attempt at humour and character, and failed in both. I forbear to mention the other papers, because I have not read them. Oh Professor, how different thy feelings now (quantum mutatus ab illo professore, qui in agris philosophiæ tantas victorias acquisivisti); how different thy proud feelings but one little week ago; thy anticipation of thy nine nights; those visionary claps, which have soothed thy soul by day and thy dreams by night! Calling in accidentally on the Professor while he was out, I was ushered into the study; and my nose quickly (most sagacious always) pointed me to four

tokens lying loose upon thy table, Professor, which indicated the violent and satanical pride of heart. Imprimis, there caught mine eye a list of six persons, thy friends, whom thou did meditate inviting to a sumptuous dinner on the Thursday, anticipating the profits of thy Saturday's play to answer charges; I was in the honoured file! Next, a stronger evidence of thy violent and almost satanical pride, lay a list of all the morning papers (from the Morning Chronicle downward to the Porcupine), with the places of their respective offices, where thou wast meditating to insert, and didst insert, an elaborate sketch of the story of thy play; stones in thy enemy's hand to bruise thee with, and severely wast thou bruised, oh Professor! nor do I know what oil to pour into thy wounds. Next—which convinced me, to a dead conviction, of thy pride, violent and almost satanical pride—lay a list of books, which thy un-tragedy-favoured pocket could never answer; Dodsley's old plays, Malone's Shakspeare (still harping upon thy play, thy philosophy abandoned meanwhile to superstitious minds); nay, I believe (if I can believe my memory), that the ambitious Encyclopædia itself was part of thy meditated acquisitions; but many a playbook was there. All these visions are *damned;* and thou, Professor, must read Shakspeare in future out of a common edition; and, hark ye, pray read him to a little better purpose! Last and strongest against thee (in colours manifest as the hand upon Belshazzar's wall) lay a volume of poems by C. Lloyd and C. Lamb. Thy heart misgave thee that thy assistant might possibly not have talent enough to furnish thee an epilogue! Manning, all these things came over my mind; all the gratulations that would have thickened upon him, and even some have glanced aside upon his humble friend; the vanity, and the fame, and the profits (the Professor is 500*l.* ideal money out of pocket by this failure, besides 200*l.* he would have got for the copyright); and now to muse upon thy altered physiognomy, thy pale and squalid appearance (a kind of *blue sickness* about the eyelids), and thy crest fallen, and thy proud demand of 200*l.* from thy bookseller changed to an uncertainty of his taking it at all, or giving thee full 50*l.* The Professor has won my heart by this *his* mournful catastrophe. You remember Marshall, who dined with him at my house; I met him in the lobby immediately after the damnation of the Professor's play, and he looked to me like an angel; his face was lengthened, and all over perspiration; I never saw such a care-fraught visage; I could have hugged him, I loved him so intensely. 'From every pore of him a perfume fell.' I have seen that man in many situations, and, from my soul, I think that a more godlike, honest

soul exists not in this world. The Professor's poor nerves trembling with the recent shock, he hurried him away to my house to supper, and there we comforted him as well as we could. He came to consult me about a change of catastrophe; but, alas! the piece was condemned long before that crisis. I at first humoured him with a specious proposition, but have since joined his true friends in advising him to give it up. He did it with a pang, and is to print it as *his*.

"L."

In another letter, a few days after, Lamb thus recurs to the subject, and closes the century in anticipation of a visit to his friend at Cambridge.

TO MR. MANNING.

"As for the Professor, he has actually begun to dive into Tavernier and Chardin's Persian Travels for a story to form a new drama for the sweet tooth of this fastidious age. Has not Bethlehem College a fair action for nonresidence against such professors? Are poets so *few* in *this age* that *he* must write poetry? *Is morals* a subject so exhausted that he must leave that line? Is the metaphysic well (without a bottom) drained dry?

"If I can guess at the wicked pride of the Professor's heart, I would take a shrewd wager that he disdains ever again to dip his pen in *prose*. Adieu, ye splendid theories! Farewell, dreams of political justice! Lawsuits, where I was counsel for Archbishop Fenelon versus my own mother, in the famous fire cause!

"Vanish from my mind, professors, one and all. I have metal more attractive on foot.

"Man of many snipes, I will sup with thee, Deo volente, et diabolo nolente, on Monday night, the 5th of January, in the new year, and crush a cup to the infant century.

"A word or two of my progress. Embark at six o'clock in the morning, with a fresh gale, on a Cambridge one-decker; very cold till eight at night; land at St. Mary's lighthouse, muffins and coffee upon table (or any other curious production of Turkey, or both Indies), snipes exactly at nine, punch to commence at ten, with argument; difference of opinion is expected to take place about eleven; perfect unanimity, with some haziness and dimness, before twelve. N.B. My single affection is not so singly wedded to snipes; but the curious and epicurean eye would also take a pleasure in beholding a delicate and well-chosen assortment of teals, ortolans, the

unctious and palate-soothing flesh of geese, wild and tame, nightingales' brains, the sensorium of a young sucking pig, or any other Christmas dish, which I leave to the judgment of you and the cook of Gonville.

"C. LAMB."

CHAPTER VII.

[1801 to 1804.]

John Woodvil Rejected, Published, and Reviewed—Letters to Manning, Wordsworth, and Coleridge.

THE ominous postponement of Lamb's theatrical hopes was followed by their disappointment at the commencement of the century. He was favoured with at least one interview by the stately manager of Drury Lane, Mr. Kemble, who extended his highbred courtesy even to authors, whom he invariably attended to the door of his house in Great Russell-street, and bade them "beware of the step." Godwin's catastrophe had probably rendered him less solicitous to encounter a similar peril; which the fondest admirers of "John Woodvil" will not regret that it escaped. While the occasional roughness of its verse would have been felt as strange to ears as yet unused to the old dramatists whom Lamb's Specimens had not then made familiar to the town, the delicate beauties enshrined within it would scarcely have been perceived in the glare of the theatre. Exhibiting "the depth, and not the tumults of the soul;" presenting a female character of modest and retiring loveliness and noble purpose, but undistracted with any violent emotion; and developing a train of circumstances which work out their gentle triumphs on the heart only of the hero, without stirring accident or vivid grouping of persons, it would scarcely have supplied sufficient of coarse interest to disarm the critical spirit which it would certainly have encountered in all its bitterness. Lamb cheerfully consoled himself by publishing it; and, at the close of the year 1801, it appeared in a small volume, of humble appearance, with the "Fragments of Burton" (to which Lamb alluded in one of his previous letters), two of his quarto ballads, and the "Helen" of his sister.

The daring peculiarities attracted the notice of the Edinburgh reviewers, then in the infancy of their slashing career,

and it was immolated, in due form, by the self-constituted judges, who, taking for their motto "*Judex damnatur cùm nocens absolvitur*," treated our author as a criminal convicted of publishing, and awaiting his doom from their sentence. With the gay recklessness of power, at once usurped and irresponsible, they introduced Lord Mansfield's wild construction of the law of libel into literature; like him, holding every *primâ facie* guilty who should be caught in the act of publishing *a book*, and referring to the court to decide whether sentence should be passed on him. The article on "John Woodvil," which adorned their third number, is a curious example of the old style of criticism vivified by the impulses of youth. We wonder now, and probably the writer of the article, if he is living, will wonder with us, that a young critic should seize on a little eighteen-penny book, simply printed, without any preface; make elaborate merriment of its outline, and, giving no hint of its containing one profound thought or happy expression, leave the reader of the review at a loss to suggest a motive for noticing such vapid absurdities. This article is written in a strain of grave banter, the theme of which is to congratulate the world on having a specimen of the rudest condition of the drama, "a man of the age of Thespis." "At length," says the reviewer, "even in composition a mighty veteran has been born. Older than Æschylus, and with all the spirit of originality, in an age of poets who had before them the imitations of some thousand years, he comes forward to establish his claim to the ancient *hircus*, and to satiate the most remote desires of the philosophic antiquary." On this text the writer proceeds, selecting for his purpose whatever, torn from its context, appeared extravagant and crude, and ending without the slightest hint that there is merit or promise of merit in the volume. There certainly was no malice or desire to give pain in all this; it was merely the result of the thoughtless adoption, by lads of gayety and talents, of the old critical canons of the monthly reviews, which had been accustomed to damn all works of unpatronised genius in a more summary way and after a duller fashion. These very critics wrought themselves into good-nature as they broke into deeper veins of thought; grew gentler as they grew wiser; and sometimes, even when, like Balaam, they came to curse, like him, they ended with "blessing altogether," as in the review of the "Excursion," which, beginning in the old strain, "This will never do," proceeded to give examples of its noblest passages, and to grace them with worthiest eulogy. And now, the spirit of the writers thus ridiculed, especially of Wordsworth, breathes through the pages of this very review,

and they not seldom wear the "rich embroidery" of the language of the poet once scoffed at by their literary corporation as too puerile for the nursery.

Lamb's occasional connexion with newspapers introduced him to some of the editors and contributors of that day, who sought to repair the spirit wasted by perpetual exertion in the protracted conviviality of the evening, and these associates sometimes left poor Lamb with an aching head, and a purse exhausted by the claims of their necessities upon it. Among those was Fenwick, immortalized as the *Bigod* of "Elia," who edited several ill-fated newspapers in succession, and was the author of many libels, which did his employers no good and his majesty's government no harm. These connexions will explain some of the allusions in the following letters.

TO MR. MANNING.

"I heard that you were going to China,* with a commission from the Wedgwoods to collect hints for their pottery, and to teach the Chinese *perspective*. But I did not know that London lay in your way to Pekin. I am seriously glad of it, for I shall trouble you with a small present for the Emperor of Usbeck Tartary, as you go by his territories; it is a fragment of a 'Dissertation on the state of political parties in England at the end of the eighteenth century,' which will, no doubt, be very interesting to his Imperial Majesty. It was written originally in English for the use of the *two*-and-*twenty* readers of 'The Albion' (this *calculation* includes a printer, four pressmen, and a devil); but, becoming of no use when 'The Albion' stopped, I got it translated into Usbeck Tartar by my good friend Tibet Kulm, who is come to London with a *civil* invitation from the Cham to the English nation to go over to the worship of the Lama.

"'The Albion' is dead; dead as nail in door; and my revenues have died with it; but I am not as a man without hope. I have got a sort of an opening to 'The Morning Chronicle!!!' Mr. Manning, by means of that common dispenser of benevolence, Mister Dyer. I have not seen Perry, the editor, yet; but I am preparing a specimen. Shall have a difficult job to manage, for you must know that Mr. Perry, in common with the great body of the whigs, thinks 'The Albion' *very low*. I find I must rise a peg or so, be a little more decent, and less abusive; for, to confess the truth, I had arrived to an abomi-

* Mr. Manning had begun to be haunted with the idea of China, and to talk of going thither, which he accomplished some years afterward, without any motive but a desire to see that great nation.

nable pitch; I spared neither age nor sex when my cue was given me. *N'importe* (as they say in French), any climate will suit me. So you are about to bring your old face-making face to London. You could not come in a better time for my purposes; for I have just lost Rickman, a faint idea of whose character I sent you. He is gone to Ireland for a year or two, to make his fortune; and I have lost by his going what seems to me I never can recover—*a finished man*. His memory will be to me as the brazen serpent to the Israelites; I shall look up to it to keep me upright and honest. But he may yet bring back his honest face to England one day. I wish your affairs with the Emperor of China had not been *so urgent*, that you might have stayed in Great Britain a year or two longer, to have seen him; for, judging from *my own* experience, I almost dare pronounce you never saw his equal. I never saw a man that could be at all second or substitute for him in any sort.

"Imagine that what is here erased was an apology and explanation, perfectly satisfactory, you may be sure! for rating this man so highly at the expense of ——, and ——, and ——, and M——, and ——, and ——, and ——. But Mr. Burke has explained this phenomenon of our nature very prettily in his letter to a member of the National Assembly, or else in his appeal to the old Whigs, I forget which; do you remember an instance from Homer (who understood these matters tolerably well) of Priam driving away his other sons with expressions of wrath and bitter reproach, when Hector was just dead.

"I live where I did in a *private* manner, because I don't like *state*. Nothing so disagreeable to me as the clamours and applauses of the mob. For this reason I live in an *obscure* situation in one of the courts of the Temple.

"C L."

"I send you all of Coleridge's letters* to me which I have preserved: some of them are upon the subject of my play. I also send you Kemble's two letters, and the prompter's courteous epistle, with a curious critique on 'Pride's Cure, by a young Physician from EDINBRO',' who modestly suggests quite another kind of plot. These are monuments of my disappointment which I like to preserve.

"In Coleridge's letters you will find a good deal of amusement, to see genuine talent struggling against a pompous dis-

* Lamb afterward, in some melancholy mood, destroyed all Coleridge's letters, and was so vexed with what he had done that he never preserved any letters which he received afterward.

play of it. I also send you the Professor's letter to me (careful professor! to conceal his *name* even from his correspondent), ere yet the Professor's pride was cured. Oh! monstrous and almost satanical pride!

"You will carefully keep all (except the Scotch Doctor's *which burn*) *in statu quo*, till I come to claim mine own.

"C. LAMB."

The following is in reply to a pressing invitation from Mr Wordsworth to visit him at the Lakes.

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

"I ought before this to have replied to your very kind invitation into Cumberland. With you and your sister I could gang anywhere; but I am afraid whether I shall ever be able to afford so desperate a journey. Separate from the pleasure of your company, I don't now care if I never see a mountain in my life. I have passed all my days in London, until I have formed as many and intense local attachments as any of you mountaineers can have done with dead nature. The lighted shops of the Strand and Fleet-street, the innumerable trades, tradesmen, and customers, coaches, wagons, playhouses; all the bustle and wickedness round about Covent Garden; the watchmen, drunken scenes, rattles; life awake, if you awake, at all hours of the night; the impossibility of being dull in Fleet-street; the crowds, the very dirt and mud, the sun shining upon houses and pavements, the printshops, the old bookstalls, parsons cheapening books, coffee-houses, steams of soups from kitchens, the pantomimes—London itself a pantomime and masquerade—all these things work themselves into my mind, and feed me without a power of satiating me. The wonder of these sights impel me into night-walks about her crowded streets, and I often shed tears in the motley Strand from fulness of joy at so much life. All these emotions must be strange to you; so are your rural emotions to me. But consider, what must I have been doing all my life not to have lent great portions of my heart with usury to such scenes?

"My attachments are all local, purely local; I have no passion (or have had none since I was in love, and then it was the spurious engendering of poetry and books) to groves and valleys. The rooms where I was born, the furniture which has been before my eyes all my life, a bookcase which has followed me about, like a faithful dog (only exceeding him in knowledge), wherever I have moved; old chairs, old tables, streets, squares, where I have sunned myself, my old school—

these are my mistresses—have I not enough without your mountains? I do not envy you. I should pity you did I not know that the mind will make friends of anything. Your sun, and moon, and skies, and hills, and lakes affect me no more, or scarcely come to me in more venerable characters, than as a gilded room with tapestry and tapers, where I might live with handsome visible objects. I consider the clouds above me but as a roof beautifully painted, but unable to satisfy the mind; and at last, like the pictures of the apartment of a connoisseur, unable to afford him any longer a pleasure. So fading upon me, from disuse, have been the beauties of Nature, as they have been confinedly called; so ever fresh, and green, and warm are all the inventions of men and assemblies of men in this great city. I should certainly have laughed with dear Joanna.*

"Give my kindest love *and my* sister's to D. and yourself. And a kiss from me to little Barbara Lewthwaite.† Thank you for liking my play!

"C. L."

The next two letters were written to Manning when on a tour upon the Continent.

TO MR. MANNING.

"*Apropos*, I think you wrong about my play. All the omissions are right; and the supplementary scene, in which Sandford narrates the manner in which his master is affected, is the best in the book. It stands where a hodgepodge of German puerilites used to stand. I insist upon it that you like that scene. Love me, love that scene. I will now transcribe the 'Londoner' (No. 1), and wind up all with affection and humble servant at the end."

[Here was transcribed the essay called "The Londoner," which was published some years afterward in "The Reflector," and which forms part of Lamb's collected works.] He then proceeds:—

"'What is all this about?' said Mrs. Shandy. 'A story of a cock and a bull,' said Yorick: and so it is; but Manning will take good-naturedly what *God will send him* across the water; only I hope he won't *shut* his *eyes* and *open* his *mouth*, as the children say, for that is the way to *gape* and not to *read*.

* Alluding to the inscriptions of Wordsworth's, entitled "Joanna," containing a magnificent description of the effects of laughter echoing amid the great mountains of Westmoreland.

† Alluding to Wordsworth's poem, "The Pet Lamb."

Manning, continue your laudable purpose of making me your register. I will render back all your remarks; and *I, not you*, shall have received usury by having read them. In the mean time, may the Great Spirit have you in his keeping, and preserve our Englishman from the inoculation of frivolity and sin upon French earth.

"*Allons* (or what is it you say), instead of *good-by?*

"Mary sends her kind remembrance, and covets the remarks equally with me.

"C. LAMB.

"Monday, 15th February, 1802."

TO MR. MANNING.

My dear Manning—I must positively write, or I shall miss you at Toulouse. I sit here like a decayed minute-hand (I lie; *that* does not *sit*), and being myself the exponent of no time, take no heed how the clocks about me are going. You possibly, by this time, may have explored all Italy, and toppled unawares into Etna, while you went too near those rotten-jawed, gap-toothed, old worn-out chaps of hell, while I am meditating a quiescent letter to the honest postmaster of Toulouse. But, in case you should not have been *felo de se*, this is to tell you that your letter was quite to my palate; in particular, your just remarks upon Industry, cursed Industry (though indeed you left me to explore the reason), were highly relishing. I've often wished I lived in the golden age, when shepherds lay stretched upon flowers—the genius there is in a man's natural, idle face, that has not learned his multiplication table! before doubt, and propositions, and corollaries got into the world!

* * * * * *

"Apropos: if you should go to Florence or Rome, inquire what works are extant in gold, silver, bronze, or marble, of Benvenuto Cellini, a Florentine artist, whose Life, doubtless, you have read; or, if not, without controversy you must read, so hark ye, send for it immediately from Lane's circulating library. It is always put among the romances, very properly; but you have read it, I suppose. In particular, inquire at Florence for his colossal bronze statue (in the grand square, or somewhere) of Perseus. You may read the story in 'Tooke's Pantheon.' Nothing material has transpired in these parts. Coleridge has indited a violent philippic against Mr. Fox in the 'Morning Post,' which is a compound of expressions of humility, gentleman-ushering-in most arrogant charges. It will do Mr. Fox no real injury among those that know him."

In the summer of 1802, Lamb, in company with his sister, visited the lakes, and spent three weeks with Coleridge at Keswick. There he also met the true annihilator of the slave-trade, Thomas Clarkson, who was then enjoying a necessary respite from his stupendous labours, in a cottage on the borders of Ulswater. Lamb had no taste for oratorical philanthropy; but he felt the grandeur and simplicity of Clarkson's character, and appreciated the unexampled self-denial with which he steeled his heart, trembling with nervous sensibility, to endure intimate acquaintance with the foulest details of guilt and wickedness which he lived, and could have died to abolish. Wordsworth was not in the lake-country during Lamb's visit; but he made amends by spending some time in town after Lamb's return, and then left it for Yorkshire to be married. Lamb's following letters show that he made some advances towards fellowship with the hills which at a distance he had treated so cavalierly; but his feelings never heartily associated with "the bare earth, and mountains bare," which sufficed Wordsworth; he rather loved to cleave to the little hints and suggestions of nature in the midst of crowded cities. In his latter years I have heard him, when longing after London among the pleasant fields of Enfield, declare that his love of natural scenery would be abundantly satisfied by the patches of long waving grass and the stunted trees that blacken in the old-churchyard nooks which you may yet find bordering on Thames-street.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

1802.

"Dear Coleridge—I thought of not writing till we had performed some of our commissions; but we have been hindered from setting about them, which yet shall be done to a tittle. We got home very pleasantly on Sunday. Mary is a good deal fatigued, and finds the difference of going *to* a place and coming *from* it. I feel that I shall remember your mountains to the last day I live. They haunt me perpetually. I am like a man who has been falling in love unknown to himself, which he finds out when he leaves the lady. I do not remember any very strong impression while they were present; but, being gone, their mementoes are shelved in my brain. We passed a very pleasant little time with the Clarksons. The Wordsworths are at Montague's rooms, near neighbours to us.* They dined with us yesterday, and I was their guide to Bartlemy fair!"

* * * * * *

* Mr. Basil Montague and his lady, who were, during Lamb's life, among his most cordial and most honoured friends.

TO MR. MANNING.

"24th Sept., 1802, London.

"My dear Manning—Since the date of my last letter I have been a traveller. A strong desire seized me of visiting remote regions. My first impulse was to go and see Paris. It was a trivial objection to my aspiring mind, that I did not understand a word of the language, since I certainly intend some time in my life to see Paris, and equally certainly intend never to learn the language; therefore that could be no objection. However, I am very glad I did not go, because you had left Paris (I see) before I could have set out. I believe, Stoddart promising to go with me another year prevented that plan. My next scheme (for to my restless ambitious mind London was become a bed of thorns) was to visit the far-famed peak in Derbyshire, where the Devil sits, they say, without breeches. *This* my purer mind rejected as indelicate; and my final resolve was a tour to the lakes. I set out with Mary to Keswick, without giving Coleridge any notice, for my time, being precious, did not admit of it. He received us with all the hospitality in the world, and gave up his time to show us all the wonders of the country. He dwells upon a small hill by the side of Keswick, in a comfortable house, quite enveloped on all sides by a net of mountains: great floundering bears and monsters they seemed, all couchant and asleep. We got in in the evening, travelling in a post-chaise from Penrith, in the midst of a gorgeous sunshine, which transmuted all the mountains into colours, purple, &c., &c. We thought we had got into fairy land. But that went off (and it never came again; while we stayed we had no more fine sunsets); and we entered Coleridge's comfortable study just in the dusk, when the mountains were all dark with clouds upon their heads. Such an impression I never received from objects of sight before, nor do I suppose that I can ever again. Glorious creatures, fine old fellows, Skiddaw, &c. I never shall forget ye, how ye lay about that night, like an intrenchment; gone to bed, as it seemed, for the night, but promising that ye were to be seen in the morning. Coleridge had got a blazing fire in his study, which is a large, antique, ill-shaped room, with an oldfashioned organ, never played upon, big enough for a church, shelves of scattered folios, an Eolian harp, and an old sofa, half bed, &c. And all looking out upon the fading view of Skiddaw and his broad-breasted brethren: what a night! Here we stayed three full weeks, in which time I visited Wordsworth's cottage, where we stayed a day or two with

the Clarksons (good people, and most hospitable, at whose house we tarried one day and night), and saw Lloyd. The Wordsworths were gone to Calais. They have since been in London, and passed much time with us: he is now gone into Yorkshire to be married. So we have seen Keswick, Grasmere, Ambleside, Ulswater, (where the Clarksons live), and a place at the other end of Ulswater, I forget the name,* to which we travelled on a very sultry day, over the middle of Helvellyn. We have clambered up to the top of Skiddaw, and I have waded up the bed of Lodore. In fine, I have satisfied myself that there is such a thing as that which tourists call *romantic*, which I very much suspected before: they make such a spluttering about it, and toss their splendid epithets around them, till they give as dim a light as at four o'clock next morning the lamps do after an illumination. Mary was excessively tired when she got about half way up Skiddaw, but we came to a cold rill (than which nothing can be imagined more cold, running over cold stones), and with the re-enforcement of a draught of cold water she surmounted it most manfully. Oh, its fine black head, and the bleak air atop of it, with a prospect of mountains all about and about, making you giddy; and then Scotland afar off, and the border countries so famous in song and ballad! It was a day that will stand out like a mountain, I am sure, in my life. But I am returned (I have now been come home near three weeks—I was a month out), and you cannot conceive the degradation I felt at first, from being accustomed to wander as free as air among mountains, and bathe in rivers without being controlled by any one, to come home and *work*. I felt very *little*. I had been dreaming I was a very great man; but that is going off, and I find I shall conform, in time, to that state of life to which it has pleased God to call me. Besides, after all, Fleet-street and the Strand are better places to live in for good and all than amid Skiddaw. Still, I turn back to those great places where I wandered about, participating in their greatness. After all, I could not *live* in Skiddaw. I could spend a year, two, three years among them, but I must have a prospect of seeing Fleet-street at the end of that time, or I should mope and pine away, I know. Still, Skiddaw is a fine creature. My habits are changing, I think, *i. e.*, from drunk to sober. Whether I shall be happier or no remains to be proved. I shall certainly be more happy in a morning; but whether I shall not sacrifice the fat, and the marrow, and the kidneys, *i. e.*, the night, glorious care-drowning night, that heals all

* Patterdale.

our wrongs, pours wine into our mortifications, changes the scene from indifferent and flat to bright and brilliant! Oh Manning, if I should have formed a diabolical resolution, by the time you come to England, of not admitting any spirituous liquors into my house, will you be my guest on such shame-worthy terms? Is life, with such limitations, worth trying? The truth is, that my liquors bring a nest of friendly harpies about my house, who consume me. This is a pitiful tale to be read at St. Gothard, but it is just now nearest my heart. F—— is a ruined man. He is hiding himself from his creditors, and has sent his wife and children into the country. ——, my other drunken companion (that has been: nam hic cæstus artemque repono), is turned editor of a Naval Chronicle. Godwin continues a steady friend, though the same facility does not remain of visiting him often. Holcroft is not yet come to town. I expect to see him, and will deliver your message. Things come crowding in to say, and no room for 'em. Some things are too little to be told, *i. e.*, to have a preference; some are too big and circumstantial. Thanks for yours, which was most delicious. Would I had been with you, benighted, &c. I fear my head is turned with wandering. I shall never be the same acquiescent being. Farewell; write again quickly, for I shall not like to hazard a letter, not knowing where the fates have carried you. Farewell, my dear fellow.

"C. LAMB."

Lamb was fond of Latin composition when at school, and was then praised for it. He was always fond of reading Latin verse, and late in life taught his sister to read it. About this time he hazarded the following Latin letter to Coleridge, of whose classical acquirements he stood in awe.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"Carolus Agnus Coleridgio suo S.

"Carissime—Scribis, ut nummos scilicet epistolarios solvam et postremo in Tartara abeam: immo tu potius Tartaricum (ut aiunt) deprehendisti, qui me vernaculâ meâ linguâ pro scribâ conductitio per tot annos satis eleganter usum ad Latinè impure et canino fere ore latrandum per tuasmet epistolas benè compositas et concinnatas percellire studueris. Conabor tamen: Attamen vereor, ut Ædes istas nostri Christi, inter quas tantâ diligentiâ magistri improbâ bonis literulis, quasi per clysterem quendam injectis, infrà supràque olim penitùs imbutus fui, Barnesii et Marklandii doctissimorum virorum nominibus adhuc gaudentes, barbarismis meis peregrinis et aliunde

quæsitis valde dehonestavero. Sed pergere quocunque placet. Adeste igitur, quotquot estis, conjugationum declinationumve turmæ, terribilia spectra, et tu imprimis ades, Umbra et Imago maxima obsoletæ (Diis gratiæ) Virgæ, quâ novissime in mentem receptâ, horrescunt subitò natales, et parum deest quo minùs braccas meas ultro usque ad crura demittam, et ipse puer pueriliter ejulem.

"Ista tua Carmina Chamouiana satis grandia esse mihi constat; sed hoc mihi nonnihil displicet, quòd in iis illæ montium Grisosonum inter se responsiones totidem reboant anglicè, *God, God*, haud aliter atque temet audivi tuas montes Cumbrianas resonare docentes, *Tod, Tod*, nempe Doctorem infelicem: vocem certe haud Deum Sonantem. Pro cæteris plaudo.

"Itidem comparationes istas tuas satis callidas et lepidas certè novi: sed quid hoc ad verum? cum illi Consulari viro et *mentem irritabilem* istùm Julianum; et etiam *astutias frigidulas* quasdem Augusto propriores, nequaquam congruenter uno afflatu comparationis causâ insedisse affirmaveris: necnon nescio quid similitudinis etiam cum Tiberio tertio in loco solicite produxeris. Quid tibi equidem cum uno vel altero Cæsare, cùm universi Duodecicm ad comparationes tuas se ultro tulerint? Præterea, vetustati adnutans, comparationes iniquas odi.

"Istas Wordsworthianas nuptias (vel potius cujusdam *Edmundii* tui) te retulisse mirificum gaudeo. Valeas, Maria, fortunata nimium, et antiquæ illæ Mariæ Virgini (comparatione plusquam Cæsareanâ) forsitan comparanda, quoniam 'beata inter mulieres:' et etiam fortasse Wordsworthium ipsum tuum maritum: Angelo Salutatori æquare fas erit, quoniam e Cœlo (ut ille) descendunt et Musæ et ipsæ Musicolæ: at Wordsworthium Musarum observantissimum semper novi. Necnon te quoque affinitate hâc nova, Dorothea, gratulor: et tu certe alterum *donum Dei*.

"Istum Ludum, quem tu, Coleridgi, Americanum garris, a Ludo (ut Ludi sunt) maximè abhorrentem prætereo: nempe quid ad Ludum attinet, totius illæ gentis Columbianæ, a nostrâ gente, eadem stirpe ortâ, ludi singuli causa voluntatem perperam alienare? Quæso ego materiam ludi: te Bella ingeris.

"Denique valeas, et quid de Latinitate meâ putes, dicas: facias ut opossum illum nostrum volantem vel (ut tu malis) quendam Piscem errabundum, a me salvum et pulcherrimum esse jubeas. Valeant uxor tua cum Hartleiio nostro. Soror mea salva est et ego: vos et ipsa salvere jubet. Ulterius progrediri non liquet: homo sum æratus.

"P.S. Pene mihi exciderat, apud me esse Librorum a Johanno Miltono Latinè scriptorum volumina duo. quæ (Deo volente) cum cæteris tuis libris ocyùs citiùs per Maria ad te

missura curabo: sed me in hoc tali genere rerum nullo modo *festinantem* novisti: habes confitentem reum. Hoc solum dici restat, prædicta volumina pulchra esse et omnia opera Latina J. M. in se continere. Circa defensionem istam Pro Pop°. Ang°. acerrimam in præsens ipse præclaro gaudio moror.

"Jussa tua Stuartina faciam ut diligenter colam.
"Iterum iterumque valeas:
"Et facias memor sis nostri."

The publication of the second volume of the "Anthology" gave occasion to the following letter:—

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"In the next edition of the 'Anthology' (which Phœbus avert, and those nine other wandering maids also!) please to blot out gentle-hearted, and substitute drunken-dog, ragged head, seld-shaven, odd-eyed, stuttering, or any other epithet which truly and properly belongs to the gentleman in question. And for Charles read Tom, or Bob, or Richard, for mere delicacy. Hang you, I was beginning to forgive you, and believe in earnest that the lugging in of my proper name was purely unintentional on your part, when, looking back for further conviction, stares me in the face Charles Lamb of the *India House*. *Now* I am convinced it was all done in malice, heaped, sack-upon-sack, congregated, studied malice. You dog! your 141st page shall not save you. I own I was just ready to acknowledge that there is a something not unlike good poetry in that page, if you had not run into the unintelligible abstraction-fit about the manner of the Deity's making spirits perceive his presence. God, nor created thing alive, can receive any honour from such thin, show-box attributes. By-the-by, where did you pick up that scandalous piece of private history about the angel and the Duchess of Devonshire? If it is a fiction of your own, why truly it is a very modest one for you. Now I do affirm that Lewti is a very beautiful poem. I *was* in earnest when I praised it. It describes a silly species of one not the wisest of passions; *therefore* it cannot deeply affect a disenthralled mind. But such imagery, such novelty, such delicacy, and such versification, never got into an 'Anthology' before. I am only sorry that the cause of all the passionate complaint is not greater than the trifling circumstance of Lewti being out of temper one day. Gaulberto certainly has considerable originality, but sadly wants finishing. It is, as it is, one of the very best in the book. Next to Lewti I like the Raven, which has a good deal of humour. I was pleased to

see it again, for you once sent it me, and I have lost the letter which contained it. Now I am on the subject of Anthologies, I must say I am sorry the old pastoral way is fallen into disrepute. The gentry which now endite sonnets are certainly the legitimate descendants of the ancient shepherds. The same simpering face of description, the old family face, is visibly continued in the line. Some of their ancestors' labours are yet to be found in Allan Ramsay's and Jacob Tonson's Miscellanies. But miscellanies decaying, and the old pastoral way dying of mere want, their successors (driven from their paternal acres) nowadays settle and live upon Magazines and Anthologies. This race of men are uncommonly addicted to superstition: some of them are idolators and worship the moon; others deify qualities, as love, friendship, sensibility; or bare accidents, as Solitude. Grief and Melancholy have their respective altars and temples among them, as the heathens builded theirs to Mors, Febris, Pallor, &c. They all agree in ascribing a peculiar sanctity to the number fourteen. One of their own legislators affirmeth, that whatever exceeds that number 'encroacheth upon the province of the elegy;' *vice versa*, whatever 'cometh short of that number abutteth upon the premises of the epigram.' I have been able to discover but few *images* in their temples, which, like the caves of Delphos of old, are famous for giving *echoes*. They impute a religious importance to the letter O, whether because by its roundness it is thought to typify the moon, the principal goddess, or for its analogies to their own labours, all ending where they began, or for what other high and mystical reference I have never been able to discover, but I observe they never begin with invocations to their gods without it, except, indeed, one insignificant sect among them, who use the Doric A, pronounced like Ah! broad, instead. These boast to have restored the old Dorian mood.

"C. L."

The following letter imbodies in strong language Lamb's disgust at the *rational* mode of educating children. While he gave utterance to a deep and hearted feeling of jealousy for the old delightful books of fancy which were banished by the sense of Mrs. Barbauld, he cherished great respect for that lady's power as a true English prose writer; and spoke often of her "Essay on Inconsistent Expectations" as alike bold and original in thought and elegant in style.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"I read daily your political essays. I was particularly pleased with 'Once a Jacobin:' though the argument is obvious enough, the style was less swelling than your things sometimes are, and it was plausible *ad populum*. A vessel has just arrived from Jamaica with the news of poor ——'s death. He died at Jamaica of the yellow fever. His course was rapid, and he had been very foolish, but I believe there was more of kindness and warmth in him than in almost any other of our schoolfellows. The annual meeting of the Blues is to-morrow, at the London Tavern, where poor Sammy dined with them two years ago, and attracted the notice of all by the singular foppishness of his dress. When men go off the stage so early, it scarce seems a noticeable thing in their epitaphs whether they have been wise or silly in their lifetime.

"I am glad the snuff and Pi-pos's* books please. 'Goody Two Shoes' is almost out of print. Mrs. Barbauld's stuff has banished all the old classics of the nursery; and the shopman at Newbery's hardly deigned to reach them off an old exploded corner of a shelf when Mary asked for them. Mrs. B.'s and Mrs. Trimmer's nonsense lay in piles about. Knowledge insignificant and vapid as Mrs. B.'s books convey, it seems, must come to a child in the *shape* of *knowledge*, and his empty noddle must be turned with conceit of his own powers when he has learned that a horse is an animal, and Billy is better than a horse, and such like: instead of that beautiful interest in wild tales which made the child a man, while all the time he suspected himself to be no bigger than a child. Science has succeeded to poetry no less in the little walks of children than with men. Is there no possibility of averting this sore evil? Think of what you would have been now, if, instead of being fed with tales and old wives' fables in childhood, you had been crammed with geography and natural history!

"Hang them! I mean the cursed reasoning crew, those blights and blasts of all that is human in man and child.

"As to the translations, let me do two or three hundred lines, and then do you try the nostrums upon Stuart in any way you please. If they go down, I will bray more. In fact, if I got or could but get 50*l.* a year only, in addition to what I have, I should live in affluence.

"Have you anticipated it, or could not you give a parallel of Bonaparte with Cromwell, particularly as the contrast in their deeds affecting *foreign* states? Cromwell's interference for the

* A nickname of endearment for little Hartley Coleridge.

Albigenses, B.'s against the Swiss. Then religion would come in; and Milton and you could rant about our countrymen of that period. This is a hasty suggestion, and the more hasty because I want my supper. I have just finished Chapman's Homer. Did you ever read it? It has most the continuous power of interesting you all along, like a rapid original, of any; and, in the uncommon excellence of the more finished parts, goes beyond Fairfax or any of 'em, The metre is fourteen syllables, and capable of all sweetness and grandeur. Cowper's ponderous blank verse detains you every step with some heavy Miltonism; Chapman gallops off with you his own free pace. Take a simile for example. The council breaks up—

'Being abroad, the earth was overlaid
With flockers to them, that came forth; as when of frequent bees
Swarms rise out of a hollow rock, repairing the degrees
Of their egression endlessly, with ever rising new
From forth their sweet nest; as their store, still as it faded, grew,
And never would cease sending forth her clusters to the spring,
They still crowd out so; this flock here, that there, belabouring
The loaded flowers. So,' &c., &c.

"What *endless egression of phrases* the dog commands!

"Take another, Agamemnon wounded, bearing his wound heroically for the sake of the army (look below) to a woman in labour.

'He, with his lance, sword, mighty stones, pour'd his heroic wreak
On other squadrons of the foe, whiles yet warm blood did break
Through his cleft veins: but when the wound was quite exhaust and crude,
The eager anguish did approve his princely fortitude.
As when most sharp and bitter pangs distract a labouring dame,
Which the divine Ilithiæ, that rule the painful frame
Of human childbirth, pour on her; the Ilithiæ that are
The daughters of Saturnia; with whose extreme repair
The woman in her travail strives to take the worst it gives;
With thought, it *must be, 'tis love's fruit, the end for which she lives;*
The mean to make herself new born, what comforts will redound:
So,' &c.

"I will tell you more about Chapman and his peculiarities in my next. I am much interested in him.

"Yours, ever affectionately, and Pi-pos's,

"C. L."

The following fragment of a letter about this time to Coleridge refers to an offer of Coleridge to supply Lamb with literal translations from the German, which he might versify for the "Morning Post," for the increase of Lamb's slender income.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"Dear Coleridge—Your offer about the German poems is exceedingly kind; but I do not think it a wise speculation,

because the time it would take you to put them into prose would be nearly as great as if you versified them. Indeed I am sure you could do the one nearly as soon as the other; so that, instead of a division of labour, it would be only a multiplication. But I will think of your offer in another light. I dare say I could find many things of a light nature to suit that paper, which you would not object to pass upon Stuart as your own, and I should come in for some light profits, and Stuart think the more highly of your assiduity. 'Bishop Hall's Characters' I know nothing about, having never seen them. But I will reconsider your offer, which is very plausible; for as to the drudgery of going every day to an editor with my scraps, like a pedler, for him to pick out and tumble about my ribands and posies, and to wait in his lobby, &c., no money could make up for the degradation. You are in too high request with him to have anything unpleasant of that sort to submit to.

* * * * * *

[The letter refers to several articles and books which Lamb promised to send to Coleridge, and proceeds:]

"You must write me word whether the cap and Miltons are worth paying carriage for. You have a Milton; but it is pleasanter to eat one's own peas out of one's own garden, than to buy them by the peck at Covent Garden; and a book reads the better which is our own, and has been so long known to us, that we know the topography of its blots, and dogs-ears, and can trace the dirt in it to having read it at tea with buttered muffins, or over a pipe, which I think is the maximum. But, Coleridge, you must accept these little things, and not think of returning money for them, for I do not set up for a factor or general agent. As for fantastic debts of 15*l.*, I'll think you were dreaming, and not trouble myself seriously to attend to you. My bad Latin you properly correct; but *natales* for *nates* was an inadvertency: I knew better. *Progrediri*, or *progredi*, I thought indifferent, my authority being Ainsworth. However, as I have got a fit of Latin, you will now and then indulge me with an *epistola*. I pay the postage of this, and propose doing it by turns. In that case I can now and then write to you without remorse; not that you would mind the money, but you have not always ready cash to answer small demands, the *epistolarii nummi*.

"Your 'Epigram on the Sun and Moon in Germany' is admirable. Take 'em all together, they are as good as Harrington's. I will muster up all the conceits I can, and you shall

have a packet some day. You and I together can answer all demands, surely: you, mounted on a terrible charger (like Homer, in the Battle of the Books), at the head of the cavalry: I will lead the light horse. I have just heard from Stoddart. Allen and he intend taking Keswick in their way home. Allen wished particularly to have it a secret that he is in Scotland, and wrote to me accordingly very urgently. As luck was, I had told not above three or four; but Mary had told Mrs. G——, of Christ's Hospital!

"For the present, farewell: never forgetting love to Pipos and his friends.

"C. LAMB."

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"Wednesday night.

"Observe, there comes to you, by the Kendal wagon to-morrow, the illustrious 4th of November, a box, containing the Miltons, the strange American Bible, with White's brief note, to which you will attend; 'Baxter's Holy Commonwealth,' for which you stand indebted to me 3*s.* 6*d.*; an odd volume of Montaigne, being of no use to me, I having the whole; certain books belonging to Wordsworth, as do also the strange thick-hoofed shoes, which are very much admired at in London. All these sundries I commend to your most strenuous looking after. If you find the Miltons in certain parts dirtied and soiled with a crumb of right Gloucester blacked in the candle (my usual supper), or, peradventure, a stray ash of tobacco wafted into the crevices, look to that passage more especially: depend upon it, it contains good matter. I have got your little Milton, which, as it contains 'Salmasius'—and I make a rule of never hearing but one side of the question (why should I distract myself?)—I shall return to you when I pick up the *Latina opera*. The first Defence is the greatest work among them, because it is uniformly great, and such as is befitting the very mouth of a great nation, speaking for itself. But the second Defence, which is but a succession of splendid episodes, slightly tied together, has one passage which, if you have not read, I conjure you to lose no time, but read it; it is his consolations in his blindness, which had been made a reproach to him. It begins whimsically, with poetical flourishes about Tiresias and other blind worthies (which still are mainly interesting as displaying his singular mind, and in what degree poetry entered into his daily soul, not by fits and impulses, but ingrained and innate), but the concluding page, *i. e.*, of *this passage* (not the *Defensis*), which you will easily find, divested of all brags and flourishes, gives so rational,

so true an enumeration of his comforts, so human, that it cannot be read without the deepest interest. Take one touch of the religious part:—'Et sane haud ultima Dei cura cæci (*we blind folks*, I understand it; not *nos* for *ego*) sumus; qui nos, quominus quicquam aliud præter ipsum cernere valemus, eo clementius atque benignius respicere dignatur. Væ qui illudit nos, væ qui lædit, execratione publica devovendo; nos ab injuriis hominum non modo incolumes, sed pene sacros divina lex reddidit, divinus favor; nec tam *oculorum hebetudine* quam *cœlestium alarum umbrâ* has nobis fecisse tenebras videtur, factas illustrare rursus interiore ac longe præstabiliore lumine haud raro solet. Huc refero, quod et amici officiosius nunc etiam quam solebant, colunt, observant, adsunt; quod et nonnulli sunt, quibuscum Pyladeas atque Theseas alternare voces verorum amicorum liceat,

> 'Vade gubernaculum mei pedis,
> Da manum ministro amico.
> Da collo manum tuum, ductor viæ ero tibi.'

All this, and much more, is highly pleasing to know. But you may easily find it; and I don't know why I put down so many words about it, but for the pleasure of writing to you, and the want of another topic.

"Yours ever,

"C. LAMB.

"To-morrow I expect with anxiety S. T. C.'s letter to Mr. Fox."

The year 1803 passed without any event to disturb the dull current of Lamb's toilsome life. He wrote nothing this year except some newspaper squibs, and the delightful little poem on the death of Hester Savory. This he sent to Manning at Paris, with the following account of its subject:—"Dear Manning, I send you some verses I have made on the death of a young Quaker you may have heard me speak of as being in love with for some years while I lived at Pentonville, though I had never spoken to her in my life. She died about a month since. If you have interest with the Abbé de Lille, you may get 'em translated: he has done as much for the Georgics." The verses must have been written in the very happiest of Lamb's serious moods. I cannot refrain from the luxury of quoting the conclusion, though many readers have it by heart.

> "My sprightly neighbour, gone before
> To that unknown and silent shore!
> Shall we not meet as heretofore,
> Some summer morning,

When from thy cheerful eyes a ray
Hath struck a bliss upon the day,
A bliss that could not go away,
A sweet forewarning!"

The following letters were written to Manning, at Paris, while still haunted with the idea of oriental adventure.

TO MR. MANNING.

"My dear Manning—The general scope of your letter afforded no indications of insanity, but some particular points raised a scruple. For God's sake don't think any more of 'Independent Tartary.' What are you to do among such Ethiopians? Is there no *lineal descendant* of Prester John? Is the chair empty? Is the sword unswayed? Depend upon it they'll never make you their king as long as any branch of that great stock is remaining. I tremble for your Christianity. Read Sir John Mandeville's travels to cure you, or come over to England. There is a Tartar man now exhibiting at Exeter Change. Come and talk with him, and hear what he says first. Indeed, he is no very favourable specimen of his countrymen! But, perhaps, the best thing you can do is to *try* to get the idea out of your head. For this purpose repeat to yourself every night, after you have said your prayers, the words Independent Tartary, Independent Tartary, two or three times, and associate with them the *idea* of *oblivion* ('tis Hartley's method with obstinate memories), or say, Independent, Independent, have I not already got an *independence?* That was a clever way of the old Puritans, pun-divinity. My dear friend, think what a sad pity it would be to bury such *parts* in heathen countries, among nasty, unconversable, horse-belching, Tartar people! Some say they are Cannibals; and then, conceive a Tartar-fellow *eating* my friend, and adding the *cool malignity* of mustard and vinegar! I am afraid 'tis the reading of Chaucer has misled you; his foolish stories about Cambuscan, and the ring, and the horse of brass. Believe me, there are no such things, 'tis all the poet's *invention;* but if there was such darling things as old Chaucer sings, I would *up* behind you on the horse of brass, and frisk off for Prester John's country. But these all are tales; a horse of brass never flew, and a king's daughter never talked with birds! The Tartars, really, are a cold, insipid, smouchey set. You'll be sadly moped (if you are not eaten) among them. Pray *try* and cure yourself. Take hellebore (the counsel is Horace's, 'twas none of my thought *originally*). Shave yourself oftener. Eat no saffron, for saffron-eaters contract a terrible Tartar-like yellow. Pray to avoid the fiend. Eat nothing

that gives the heartburn. *Shave the upper lip.* Go about like a European. Read no books of voyages (they are nothing but lies), only now and then a romance, to keep the fancy *under.* Above all, don't go to any sights of *wild beasts. That has been your ruin.* Accustom yourself to write familiar letters, on common subjects, to your friends in England, such as are of a moderate understanding. And think about common things more. I supped last night with Rickman, and met a merry *natural* captain, who pleases himself vastly with once having made a pun at Otaheite in the O. language.* 'Tis the same man who said Shakspeare he liked, because he was so *much of the gentleman.* Rickman is a man 'absolute in all numbers.' I think I may one day bring you acquainted, if you do not go to Tartary first; for you'll never come back. Have a care, my dear friend, of Anthropophagi! their stomachs are always craving. 'Tis terrible to be weighed out at fivepence a pound. To sit at table (the reverse of fishes in Holland), not as a guest, but as a meat.

"God bless you: do come to England. Air and exercise may do great things. Talk with some minister. Why not your father?

"God dispose all for the best. I have discharged my duty.

"Your sincere friend,

"C. LAMB.

"19th February, 1803, London."

TO MR. MANNING.

"1803.

"Not a sentence, not a syllable of Trismegistus, shall be lost through my neglect. I am his word-banker, his storekeeper of puns and syllogisms. You cannot conceive (and, if Trismegistus cannot, no man can) the strange joy which I felt at the receipt of a letter from Paris. It seemed to give me a learned importance, which placed me above all who had not Parisian correspondents. Believe that I shall carefully husband every scrap, which will save you the trouble of memory, when you come back. You cannot write things so trifling, let them only be about Paris, which I shall not treasure. In particular, I must have parallels of actors and actresses. I must be told if any building in Paris is at all comparable to Saint Paul's, which, contrary to the usual mode of that part of our nature called admiration, I have looked up to with unfading wonder every morning at ten o'clock, ever since

* Captain, afterward Admiral Burney, who became one of the most constant attendants on Lamb's parties, and whose son, Martin, grew up in his strongest regard, and received the honour of the dedication of the second volume of his works.

it has lain in my way to business. At noon I casually glance upon it, being hungry; and hunger has not much taste for the fine arts. Is any night-walk comparable to a walk from St. Paul's to Charing Cross, for lighting, and paving, crowds going and coming without respite, the rattle of coaches, and the cheerfulness of shops? Have you seen a man guillotined yet? Is it as good as hanging? Are the women *all* painted, and the men *all* monkeys? or are there not a *few* that look like *rational* of *both sexes?* Are you and the first consul *thick?* All this expense of ink I may fairly put you to, as your letters will not be solely for my proper pleasure; but are to serve as memoranda and notices, helps for short memory, a kind of Rumfordizing recollection for yourself on your return. Your letter was just what a letter should be, crammed, and very funny. Every part of it pleased me till you came to Paris, and your philosophical indolence or indifference stung me. You cannot stir from your rooms till you know the language! What the devil! are men nothing but word-trumpets? Are men all tongue and ear? Have these creatures, that you and I profess to know *something about*, no faces, gestures, gabble, no folly, no absurdity, no induction of French education upon the abstract idea of men and women, no similitude or dissimilitude to English? Why, thou cursed Smellfungus! your account of your landing and reception, and Bullen (I forget how you spell it, it was spelt my way in Harry the Eighth's time) was exactly in that minute style which strong impressions INSPIRE (writing to a Frenchman, I write as a Frenchman would). It appears to me as if I should die with joy at the first landing in a foreign country. It is the nearest pleasure which a grown man can substitute for that unknown one which he can never know, the pleasure of the first entrance into life from the womb. I dare say, in a short time, my habits would come back like a 'stronger man' armed, and drive out that new pleasure; and I should soon sicken from known objects. Nothing has transpired here that seems to me of sufficient importance to send dry-shod over the water: but I suppose you will want to be told some news. The best and the worst to me is, that I have given up two guineas a week at the 'Post,' and regained my health and spirits, which were upon the wane. I grew sick, and Stuart unsatisfied. *Ludisti satis, tempus abire est:* I must cut closer, that's all. Mister Fell, or, as you, with your usual facetiousness and drollery, call him, Mr. F+ll has stopped short in the middle of his play. Some *friend* has told him that it has not the least merit in it. Oh! that I had the rectifying of the Litany! I would put in a *libera nos* (*Scriptores videlicet*) *ab amicis!* That's all the news.

A propos (is it pedantry, writing to a Frenchman, to express myself sometimes by a French word, when an English one would not do as well? methinks my thoughts fall naturally into it) ·

* * * * * *

"My dear Manning—Although something of the latest, and after two months' waiting, your letter was highly gratifying. Some parts want a little explication; for example, 'the god-like face of the first consul.' *What god* does he most resemble, Mars, Bacchus, or Apollo? or the god Serapis, who, flying (as Egyptian chronicles deliver) from the fury of the dog Anubis (the hieroglyph of an English mastiff), lighted upon Monomotapa (or the land of apes), by some thought to be Old France, and there set up a tyranny, &c. Our London prints of him represent him gloomy and sulky, like an angry Jupiter. I hear that he is very small, even less than me. I envy you your access to this great man, much more than your séances and conversaziones, which I have a shrewd suspicion must be something dull. What you assert concerning the actors of Paris, that they exceed our comedians, bad as ours are, is *impossible*. In one sense it may be true, that their fine gentlemen, in what is called genteel comedy, may possibly be more brisk and *dégagé* than Mr. Caulfield or Mr. Whitfield, but have any of them the power to move *laughter in excess?* or can a Frenchman *laugh?* Can they batter at your judicious ribs till they *shake*, nothing loath to be so shaken? This is John Bull's criterion, and it shall be mine. You are Frenchified. Both your taste and morals are corrupt and perverted. By-and-by you will come to assert that Bonaparte is as great a general as the old Duke of Cumberland, and deny that one Englishman can beat three Frenchmen. Read Henry the Fifth to restore your orthodoxy. All things continue at a stay-still in London. I cannot repay your new novelties with my stale reminiscences. Like the prodigal, I have spent my patrimony, and feed upon the superannuated chaff and dry husks of repentance; yet sometimes I remember with pleasure the hounds and horses which I kept in the days of my prodigality. I find nothing new, nor any thing that has so much of the gloss and dazzle of novelty as may rebound in narrative, and cast a reflective glimmer across the channel. Did I send you an epitaph I scribbled upon a poor girl who died at nineteen; a good girl, and a pretty girl, and a clever girl, but strangely neglected by all her friends and kin?

'Under this cold marble stone
Sleep the sad remains of one
Who, when alive, by few or none

Was loved, as loved she might have been,
If she prosperous days had seen,
Or had thriving been, I ween.
Only this cold funeral stone
Tells she was beloved by one,
Who on the marble graves his moan.'

"I send you this, being the only piece of poetry I have *done* since the muses all went with T. M. to Paris. I have neither stuff in my brain nor paper in my drawer to write you a longer letter. Liquor, and company, and wicked tobacco, a' nights, have quite dispericraniated me, as one may say; but you, who spiritualize upon Champagne, may continue to write long long letters, and stuff 'em with amusement to the end. Too long they cannot be, any more than a codicil to a will which leaves me sundry parks and manors not specified in the deed. But don't be *two months* before you write again. These from merry old England, on the day of her valiant patron St. George.

"C. LAMB."

CHAPTER VIII.

[1804 to 1806.]

Letters to Manning, Wordsworth, Rickman, and Hazlitt.—"Mr. H." written —accepted—damned.

THERE is no vestige of Lamb's correspondence in the year 1804, nor does he seem to have written for the press. This year, however, added to his list of friends—one in whose conversation he took great delight, until death severed them—William Hazlitt. This remarkable metaphysician and critic had then just completed his first work, the "Essay on the Principles of Human Action," but had not entirely given up his hope of excelling as a painter. After a professional tour through part of England, during which he satisfied his sitters better than himself, he remained some time at the house of his brother, then practising as a portrait painter with considerable success; and while endeavouring to procure a publisher for his work, painted a portrait of Lamb. It is one of the last of Hazlitt's efforts in an art which he afterward illustrated with the most exquisite criticism which the knowledge and love of it could inspire.

Among the vestiges of the early part of 1805 are the three following letters to Manning. If the hero of the next letter,

Mr. Richard Hopkins, is living, I trust he will not repine at being ranked with those who

"Do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame."

TO MR. MANNING.

"16 Mitre Court Buildings,
"Saturday, 24th Feb., 1806.

'Dear Manning—I have been very unwell since I saw you. A sad depression of spirits, a most unaccountable nervousness, from which I have been partially relieved by an odd accident. You knew Dick Hopkins, the scullion of Caius? This fellow, by industry and agility, has thrust himself into the important situations (no sinecures, believe me) of cook to Trinity Hall and Caius College: and the generous creature has contrived, with the greatest delicacy imaginable, to send me a present of Cambridge brawn. What makes it the more extraordinary is, that the man never saw me in his life that I know of. I suppose he has *heard* of me. I did not immediately recognise the donor; but one of Richard's cards, which had accidentally fallen into the straw, detected him in a moment. Dick, you know, was always remarkable for flourishing. His card imports, that 'orders (to wit, for brawn) from any part of England, Scotland, or Ireland, will be duly executed,' &c. At first I thought of declining the present; but Richard knew my blind side when he pitched upon brawn. 'Tis, of all my hobbies, the supreme in the eating way. He might have sent sops from the pan, skimmings, crumpets, chips, hog's lard, the tender brown judiciously scalped from a fillet of veal (dexterously replaced by a salamander), the tops of asparagus, fugitive livers, runaway gizzards of fowls, the eyes of martyred pigs, tender effusions of laxative woodcocks the red spawn of lobsters, leveret's ears, and such pretty filchings common to cooks; but these had been ordinary presents, the everyday courtesies of dish-washers to their sweethearts. Brawn was a noble thought. It is not every common gullet-fancier that can properly esteem of it. It is like a picture of one of the old Italian masters. Its gusto is of that hidden sort. As Wordsworth sings of a modest poet, 'you must love him, ere to you he will seem worthy of your love;' so brawn you must taste it ere to you it will have any taste at all. But 'tis nuts to the adept: those that will send out their tongues and feelers to find it out. It will be wooed and, not unsought, be won. Now, ham-essence, lobsters, turtle, such popular minions, absolutely *court you*, lay themselves out to strike you at first smack, like one of David's pictures (they call him *Darveed*), compared with the plain russet-coated

wealth of a Titian or a Corregio, as I illustrated above. Such are the obvious glaring heathen virtues of a corporation dinner, compared with the reserved collegiate worth of a brawn. Do me the favour to leave off the business which you may be at present upon, and go immediately to the kitchens of Trinity and Caius, and make my most respectful compliments to Mr. Richard Hopkins, and assure him that his brawn is most excellent; and that I am, moreover, obliged to him for his innuendo about salt water and bran, which I shall not fail to improve. I leave it to you whether you shall choose to pay him the civility of asking him to dinner while you stay in Cambridge, or in whatever other way you may best like to show your gratitude to *my friend*. Richard Hopkins, considered in many points of view, is a very extraordinary character. Adieu; I hope to see you to supper in London soon, where we will taste Richard's brawn, and drink his health in a cheerful but moderate cup. We have not many such men in any rank of life as Mr. R. Hopkins. Crisp, the barber of St. Mary's, was just such another. I wonder *he* never sent me any little token, some chestnuts, or a puff, or two pounds of hair, just to remember him by. Gifts are like nails. Præsens ut absens; that is, your *present* makes amends for your absence.

"Yours, C. LAMB."

TO MR. MANNING.

"Dear Manning—I sent to Brown's immediately. Mr. Brown (or Pijou, as he is called by the moderns) denied the having received a letter from you. The one for you he remembered receiving, and remitting to Leadenhall-street; whither I immediately posted (it being the middle of dinner), my teeth unpicked. There I learned, that if you want a letter set right, you must apply at the first door on the left hand before one o'clock. I returned and picked my teeth. And this morning I made my application in form, and have seen the vagabond letter, which most likely accompanies this. If it does not, I will get Rickman to name it to the speaker, who will not fail to lay the matter before parliament the next sessions, when you may be sure to have all abuses in the post department rectified.

"N.B. There seems to be some informality epidemical. You direct yours to me in Mitre-court; my true address is Mitre-court Buildings. By the pleasantries of Fortune, who likes a joke or a *double entendre* as well as the best of us her children, there happens to be another Mr. Lamb (that there should be two!!) in Mitre-court.

"Farewell, and think upon it. C. L.

"Saturday."

TO MR. MANNING.

"Dear Manning—Certainly you could not have called at all hours from two till ten, for we have been only out of an evening Monday and Tuesday in this week. But, if you think you have, your thought shall go for the deed. We did pray for you on Wednesday night. Oysters unusually luscious; pearls of extraordinary magnitude found in them. I have made bracelets of them; given them in clusters to ladies. Last night we went out in despite, because you were not come at your hour.

"This night we shall be at home, so shall we certainly both Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Take your choice; mind, I don't say of one; but choose which evening you will not, and come the other four. Doors open at five o'clock. Shells forced about nine. Every gentleman smokes or not, as he pleases.

"C. L."

During the last five years, tobacco had been at once Lamb's solace and his bane. In the hope of resisting the temptation of late conviviality to which it ministered, he formed a resolution, the virtue of which can be but dimly guessed, to abandon its use; and imbodied the floating fancies which had attended on his long wavering in one of the richest of his poems, "The Farewell to Tobacco." After many struggles he divorced himself from his genial enemy; and though he afterward renewed acquaintance with milder dalliance, he ultimately abandoned it, and was guiltless of a pipe in his latter years. The following letter, addressed while his sister was laid up with severe and protracted illness, will show his feelings at this time. Its affecting self-upbraidings refer to no greater failings than the social indulgences against which he was manfully struggling.

TO MISS WORDSWORTH.

"Friday, 14th June, 1805.

"My dear Miss Wordsworth—I try to think Mary is recovering, but I cannot always feel it; and, meanwhile, she is lost to me, and I miss a prop. All my strength is gone, and I am like a fool bereft of her co-operation. I dare not think, lest I should think wrong; so used am I to look up to her in the least and the biggest perplexity. To say *all that I find her* would be more than I think anybody could possibly understand; and when I hope to have her well again soon, it would be sinning against her feelings to go about to praise her, for

I can conceal nothing that I do from her. She is older, and wiser, and better than me, and all my wretched imperfections I cover to myself by resolutely thinking on her goodness. She would share life and death with me. She lives but for me. And I know I have been wasting and teazing her life for five years past incessantly with my ways of going on. But even in this upbraiding of myself I am offending against her, for I know that she has cleaved to me for better for worse; and, if the balance has been against her hitherto, it was a noble trade. I am stupid, and lose myself in what I write. I write rather what answers to my feelings (which are sometimes sharp enough) than express my present ones, for I am only flat and stupid.

* * * * * *

"I cannot resist transcribing three or four lines which poor Mary made upon a picture (a Holy Family) which we saw at an auction only one week before she was taken ill. They are sweet lines and upon a sweet picture. But I send them only as the latest memorial of her.

'VIRGIN AND CHILD, L. DA VINCI.

'Maternal lady with thy virgin-grace,
Heaven-born, thy Jesus seemeth sure,
And thou a virgin pure.
Lady most perfect, when thy angel face
Men look upon. they wish to be
A Catholic, Madona fair, to worship thee.

"You had her lines about the 'Lady Blanch.' You have not had some which she wrote upon a copy of a girl from Titian, which I had hung up where that print of Blanch and the Abbess (as she beautifully interpreted two female figures from L. da Vinci) had hung in our room. 'Tis light and pretty.

'Who art thou, fair one, who usurp'st the place
Of Blanch, the lady of the matchless grace?
Come, fair and pretty, tell to me
Who in thy lifetime thou mightst be?
Thou pretty art and fair,
But with the Lady Blanch thou never must compare.
No need for Blanch her history to tell,
Whoever saw her face they there did read it well;
But when I look on thee, I only know
There lived a pretty maid some hundred years ago.'

"This is a little unfair, to tell so much about ourselves, and to advert so little to your letter, so full of comfortable tidings of you all. But my own cares press pretty close upon me, and you can make allowance. That you may go on gathering strength and peace is the next wish to Mary's recovery.

"I had almost forgot your repeated invitation. Supposing

that Mary will be well and able, there is another *ability* which you may guess at, which I cannot promise myself. In prudence we ought not to come. This illness will make it still more prudential to wait. It is not a balance of this way of spending our money against another way, but an absolute question of whether we shall stop now, or go on wasting away the little we have got beforehand. My best love, however, to you all; and to that most friendly creature, Mrs. Clarkson, and better health to her when you see or write to her.

"CHARLES LAMB."

The "Farewell to Tobacco" was shortly after transmitted to Mr. and Miss Wordsworth with the following:—

TO MR. AND MISS WORDSWORTH.

"I wish you may think this a handsome farewell to my 'Friendly Traitress.' Tobacco has been my evening comfort and my morning curse for these five years; and you know how difficult it is from refraining to pick one's lips even when it has become a habit. This poem is the only one which I have finished since so long as when I wrote 'Hester Savory.' I have had it in my head to do it these two years, but tobacco stood in its own light when it gave me headaches that prevented my singing its praises. Now you have got it, you have got all my store, for I have absolutely not another line. No more has Mary. We have nobody about us that cares for poetry, and who will rear grapes when he shall be the sole eater? Perhaps if you encourage us to show you what we may write, we may do something now and then before we absolutely forget the quantity of an English line for want of practice. The 'Tobacco' being a little in the way of Withers (whom Southey so much likes), perhaps you will somehow convey it to him with my kind remembrances. Then everybody will have seen it that I wish to see it, I having sent it to Malta.

"I remain, dear W. and D., yours truly,

"C. LAMB.

"28th September, 1805."

The following letter to Hazlitt bears date 18th Nov., 1805.

TO MR. HAZLITT.

"Dear Hazlitt—I was very glad to hear from you, and that your journey was so *picturesque*. We miss you, as we foretold we should. One or two things have happened which are beneath the dignity of epistolary communication, but

which, seated about our fireside at night (the winter hands of pork have begun), gesture and emphasis might have talked into some importance. Something about ——'s wife; for instance, how tall she is, and that she visits pranked up like a Queen of the May, with green streamers: a good-natured woman though, which is as much as you can expect from a friend's wife, whom you got acquainted with a bachelor. Some things, too, about Monkey,* which can't so well be written: how it set up for a fine lady, and thought it had got lovers, and was obliged to be convinced of its age from the parish register, where it was proved to be only twelve; and an edict issued that it should not give itself airs yet these four years; and how it got leave to be called Miss, by grace: these, and such like hows, were in my head to tell you, but who can write? Also, how Manning is come to town in spectacles, and studies physic; is melancholy, and seems to have something in his head which he don't impart. Then, how I am going to leave off smoking. Oh la! your Leonardos of Oxford made my mouth water. I was hurried through the gallery, and they escaped me. What do I say? I was a Goth then, and should not have noticed them. I had not settled my notions of beauty; I have now for ever! the small head, the long eye—that sort of peering curve—the wicked Italian mischief; the stick-at-nothing, Herodias' daughter-kind of grace. You understand me? But you disappoint me in passing over in absolute silence the Blenheim Leonardo. Didn't you see it? Excuse a lover's curiosity. I have seen no pictures of note since except at Mr. D——'s gallery. It is curious to see how differently two great men treat the same subject, yet both excellent in their way. For instance, Milton and Mr. D——. Mr. D—— has chosen to illustrate the story of Samson exactly in the point of view in which Milton has been most happy: the interview with the Jewish hero, blind and captive, and Delilah. Milton has imagined his locks grown again, strong as horsehair or porcupine's bristles; doubtless, shaggy and black, as being hairs 'which, of a nation armed, contained the strength.' I don't remember he *says* black; but could Milton imagine them to be yellow? Do you? Mr. D——, with striking originality of conception, has crowned him with a thin yellow wig, in colour precisely like Dyson's; in curl and quantity resembling Mrs. P——'s; his limbs rather stout—about such a man as my brother or Rickman—but no Atlas nor Hercules, nor yet so long as Dubois, the clown of Sadler's Wells. This was judicious, ta-

* The daughter of a friend, whom Lamb exceedingly liked from a child, and always called by this epithet.

king the spirit of the story rather than the fact; for, doubtless, God could communicate national salvation to the trust of flax and tow as well as hemp and cordage, and could draw down a temple with a golden tress as soon as with all the cables of the British navy.

* * * * * *

"Wasn't you sorry for Lord Nelson? I have followed him in fancy ever since I saw him walking in Pall-Mall (I was prejudiced against him before), looking just as a hero should look; and I have been very much cut about it indeed. He was the only pretence of a great man we had. Nobody is left of any name at all. His secretary died by his side. I imagined him, a Mr. Scott, to be the man you met at Hume's; but I learn from Mrs. Hume that it is not the same. I met Mrs. H. one day, and agreed to go on the Sunday to tea, but the rain prevented us and the distance. I have been to apologize, and we are to dine there the first fine Sunday! Strange perverseness. I never went while you stayed here, and now I go to *find you*. What other news is there, Mary? What puns have I made in the last fortnight? You never remember them. You have no relish of the comic. 'Oh! tell Hazlitt not to forget to send me the American Farmer. I dare say it is not so good as he fancies; but a book's a book.' I have not heard from Wordsworth or from Malta since. Charles Kemble, it seems, enters into possession to-morrow. We sup at 109 Russell-street this evening. I wish your friend would not drink. It's a blemish in the greatest characters. You send me a modern quotation poetical. How do you like this in an old play? Vittoria Corombona, a spunky Italian lady, a Leonardo one, nicknamed the White Devil, being on her trial for murder, &c., and questioned about seducing a duke from his wife and the state, makes answer:—

> 'Condemn you me for that the duke did love me?
> So may you blame some fair and crystal river,
> For that some melancholic distracted man
> Hath drown'd himself in it.'

"N.B. I shall expect a line from you, if but a bare line, whenever you write to Russell-street, and a letter often when you do not. I pay no postage. But I will have consideration for you until parliament time and franks. Luck to Ned Search and the new art of colouring. Monkey sends her love, and Mary specially.

"Yours truly,

"C. LAMB."

Lamb introduced Hazlitt to Godwin; and we find him early in the following year thus writing respecting the offer of Hazlitt's work to Johnson, and his literary pursuits.

TO MR. HAZLITT.

"Thursday, 15th Jan., 1806.

"Dear Hazlitt—Godwin went to Johnson's yesterday about your business. Johnson would not come down, or give any answer, but has promised to open the manuscript, and to give you an answer in one month. Godwin will punctually go again (Wednesday is Johnson's open day) yesterday four weeks next: *i. e.*, in one lunar month from this time. Till when, Johnson positively declines giving any answer. I wish you joy on ending your Search. Mrs. H. was naming something about a 'Life of Fawcett,' to be by you undertaken: the great Fawcett, as she explained to Manning when he asked '*what Fawcett?*' He innocently thought *Fawcett the player.* But Fawcett the divine is known to many people, albeit unknown to the Chinese inquirer. I should think, if you liked it, and Johnson declined it, Phillips is the man. He is perpetually bringing out biographies, Richardson, Wilks, Foot, Lee Lewis, without number: little trim things in two easy volumes, price 12*s.* the two, made up of letters to and from, scraps, posthumous trifles, anecdotes, and about forty pages of hard biography; you might dish up a Fawcettiad in three months, and ask 60*l.* or 80*l.* for it. I dare say that Phillips would catch at it. I wrote you the other day in a great hurry. Did you get it? This is merely a letter of business at Godwin's request. Lord Nelson is quiet at last. His ghost only keeps a slight fluttering in odes and elegies in newspapers, and impromptus, which could not be got ready before the funeral.

"As for news, —— is coming to town on Monday (if no kind angel intervene) to surrender himself to prison. He hopes to get the rules of the Fleet. On the same or nearly the same day, F——, my other quondam co-friend and drinker, will go to Newgate, and his wife and four children, I suppose, to the parish. Plenty of reflection and motives of gratitude to the wise Disposer of all things in us, whose prudent conduct has hitherto ensured us a warm fire and snug roof over our heads. *Nullum numen abest si sit Prudentia.* Alas! Prudentia is in the last quarter of her tutelary shining over me. A little time and I—but maybe I may, at last, hit upon some mode of collecting some of the vast superfluities of this money-voiding town. Much is to be got, and I do not want much. All I ask is time and leisure; and I am cruelly

off for them. When you have the inclination I shall be very glad to have a letter from you. Your brother and Mrs. H., I am afraid, think hardly of us for not coming oftener to see them, but we are distracted beyond what they can conceive with visiters and visitings. I never have an hour for my head to work quietly its own workings; which, you know, is as necessary to the human system as sleep. Sleep, too, I can't get for these winds of a night: and without sleep and rest what should ensue?

"Yours, dear H.,

"C. LAMB."

TO MR. HAZLITT.

"Dear H.—Godwin has just been here in his way from Johnson's. Johnson has had a fire in his house; this happened about five weeks ago; it was in the daytime, so it did not burn the house down, but it did so much damage that the house must come down to be repaired. His nephew that we met on Hampstead Hill put it out. Well, this fire has put him so back, that he craves one more month before he gives you an answer. I will certainly goad Godwin (if necessary) to go again this very day four weeks; but I am confident he will want no goading. Three or four most capital auctions of pictures advertised; in May, *Wellbore Ellis Agar's*, the first private collection in England, so Holcroft says. In March, Sir George Young's, in Stratford-place (where Cosway lives), and a Mr. Hulse's at Blackheath, both very capital collections, and have been announced for some months. Also the Marquis of Lansdown's pictures in March; and, though inferior to mention, lastly, the Dulwich Gallery. Don't your mouth water to be here? T'other night Loftus called, whom we have not seen since you went before. We meditate a stroll next Wednesday, fast day. He happened to light upon Mr. Holcroft, wife, and daughter, their first visit at our house. Your brother called last night. We keep up our intimacy. He is going to begin a large Madona and child from Mrs. H. and baby. I fear he goes astray after *ignes fatui*. He is a clever man. By-the-by, I saw a miniature of his as far excelling any in his show cupboard (that of your sister not excepted) as that show cupboard excels the show things you see in windows, an old woman—hang her name—but most superlative; he has it to clean—I'll ask him the name—but the best miniature I ever saw. But for oil pictures!—what has he to do with Madonas?—if the Virgin Mary were alive and visitable, he would not hazard himself in a Covent-Garden-pit-crowd to see her. It an't his style of beauty, is it? But he will go on painting

things he ought not to paint, and not painting things he ought to paint. Manning not gone to China, but talks of going this spring. God forbid. Coleridge not heard of. I am going to leave off smoke. In the mean time, I am so smoky with last night's ten pipes, that I must leave off. Mary begs her kind remembrances. Pray write to us. This is no letter, but I supposed you grew anxious about Johnson.

"N.B. Have taken a room at three shillings a week, to be in between five and eight at night, to avoid my *nocturnal* alias *knock-eternal* visiters. The first fruits of my retirement has been a farce which to manager to-morrow. *Wish my ticket luck.* God bless you, and do write.

"Yours, *fumosissimus*,
"C. LAMB.

"Wednesday, 19th Feb., 1806."

The farce referred to in the foregoing letter is the delightful *jeu-d'esprit*, "MR. H.," destined to only one night's stage existence, but to become "a good jest for ever." It must be confessed that it has not substance enough for a dramatic piece in two acts; a piece which must present a show of real interest, involve its pair of young lovers in actual perplexities, and terminate in the seriousness of marriage! It would be rare sport in Milton's "Limbo of Vanity," but is too airy for the ponderous sentimentalism of the modern school of farce. As Swift, in "Gulliver," brings everything to the standard of size, so in this farce everything is reduced to an alphabetical standard. Humour is sent to school to learn its letters; or, rather, letters are made instinct with the most delicate humour. It is the apotheosis of the alphabet, and teaches the value of a good name without the least hint of moral purposes. This mere pleasantry; this refining on sounds and letters; this verbal banter, and watery collision of the pale reflexions of words, could not succeed on a stage which had begun to require interest, moral or immoral, to be interwoven with the web of all its actions; which no longer rejoiced in the riot of animal spirits and careless gayety; which no longer permitted wit to take the sting from evil, as well as the load from care; but infected even its prince of rakes, Charles Surface, with a cant of sentiment which makes us turn for relief to the more honest hypocrite his brother. MR. H. "could never *do*;" but its composition was pleasant, and its acceptance gave Lamb some of the happiest moments he ever spent. Thus he announces it to Wordsworth, in reply to a letter communicating to him that the poet was a father.

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

" Dear Wordsworth—We are pleased, you may be sure, with the good news of Mrs. W——. Hope all is well over by this time. 'A fine boy!—have you any more?—one more and a girl—poor copies of me!' *vide* MR. H., a farce which the proprietors have done me the honour; but I will set down Mr. Wroughton's own words. N. B. The ensuing letter was sent in answer to one which I wrote, begging to know if my piece had any chance, as I might make alterations, &c. I, writing on the Monday, there comes this letter on the Wednesday. Attend!

[Copy of a Letter from Mr. R. Wroughton.]

'Sir—Your piece of MR. H., I am desired to say, is accepted at Drury Lane Theatre by the proprietors, and, if agreeable to you, will be brought forward when the proper opportunity serves. The piece shall be sent to you for your alterations in the course of a few days, as the same is not in my hands, but with the proprietors.

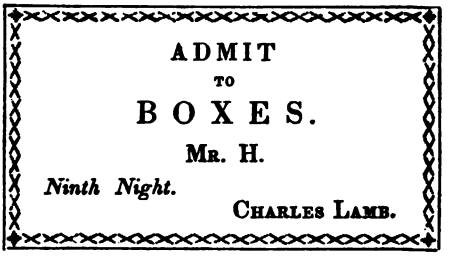
'I am, sir, your obedient servant,

'RICHARD WROUGHTON.

[Dated]
'66 Gower-street,
'Wednesday, June 11, 1806.'

" On the following Sunday Mr. T. comes. The scent of a manager's letter brought him. He would have gone farther any day on such a business. I read the letter to him. He deems it authentic and peremptory. Our conversation naturally fell upon pieces, different sorts of pieces; what is the best way of offering a piece, how far the caprice of managers is an obstacle in the way of a piece, how to judge of the merits of a piece, how long a piece may remain in the hands of the managers before it is acted; and my piece, and your piece, and my poor brother's piece—my poor brother was all his life endeavouring to get a piece accepted.

" I wrote that in mere wantonness of triumph. Have nothing more to say about it. The managers, I thank my stars, have decided its merits for ever. They are the best judges of pieces, and it would be insensible in me to affect a false modesty after the very flattering letter which I have received.



"I think this will be as good a pattern for orders as I can think on. A little thin flowery border, round, neat, not gaudy, and the Drury Lane Apollo, with the harp at the top. Or shall I have no Apollo?—simply nothing? Or perhaps the comic muse?

"The same form, only I think without the Apollo, will serve for the pit and galleries. I think it will be best to write my name at full length; but, then, if I give away a great many, that will be tedious. Perhaps *Ch. Lamb* will do.

"BOXES, now I think on it, I'll have in capitals. The rest in a neat Italian hand. Or better, perhaps, Boxes in old English characters, like Madoc or Thalaba?

* * * * * *

"*Apropos* of Spenser (you will find him mentioned a page or two before, near enough for an *àpropos*), I was discoursing on poetry (as one's apt to deceive one's self, and, when a person is willing to *talk* of what one likes, to believe that he also likes the same, as lovers do) with a young gentleman of my office, who is deep read in Anacreon Moore, Lord Strangford, and the principal modern poets, and I happened to mention Epithalamiums, and that I could show him a very fine one of Spenser's. At the mention of this my gentleman, who is a very fine gentleman, pricked up his ears, and expressed great pleasure, and begged that I would give him leave to copy it: he did not care how long it was (for I objected the length), he should be very happy to see *anything by him.* Then pausing and looking sad, he ejaculated 'POOR SPENCER!' I begged to know the reason of this ejaculation, thinking that time had by this time softened down any calamities which the bard might have endured. 'Why, poor fellow!' said he, 'he has lost his wife!' 'Lost his wife!' said I, 'who are you talking of?' 'Why, Spencer!' said he; 'I've read the "Monody" he wrote on the occasion, and *a very pretty thing it is.*' This led to an explanation (it could be delayed no longer), that the

sound Spenser, which, when poetry is talked of, generally excites an image of an old bard in a ruff, and sometimes with it dim notions of Sir P. Sidney, and perhaps Lord Burleigh, had raised in my gentleman a quite contrary image of the Honourable William Spencer, who has translated some things from the German very prettily, which are published with Lady Di. Beauclerk's designs. Nothing like defining of terms when we talk. What blunders might I have fallen into of quite inapplicable criticism but for this timely explanation.

"N.B. At the beginning of *Edm.* Spenser (to prevent mistakes), I have copied from my own copy, and primarily from a book of Chalmers's on Shakspeare, a sonnet of Spenser's never printed among his poems. It is curious as being manly and rather Miltonic, and as a sonnet of Spenser's with nothing in it about love or knighthood. I have no room for remembrances; but I hope our doing your commission will prove we do not quite forget you. C. L."

The interval between the completion of the farce "and its first acting," though full of bright hopes of dramatic success, was not all a phantasm. The following two letters to Mr. Rickman, now one of the Clerks of the House of Commons, show Lamb's unwearied kindness.

TO MR. RICKMAN.

"Dear Rickman—You do not happen to have any place at your disposal which would suit a decayed man of letters? I do not much expect that you have, or that you will go much out of your way to serve the object, when you hear it is F. But the case is, by a *mistaking* of his *turn*, as they call it, he is reduced, I am afraid, to extremities, and would be extremely glad of a place in an office. Now, it does sometimes happen, that just as a man wants a place, a place wants him; and though this is a lottery to which none but G. B. would choose to trust his all, there is no harm just to call in at Despair's office for a friend, and see if *his* number is come up (B.'s further case I enclose by way of episode). Now, if you should happen, or anybody you know, to want a *hand*, here is a young man of solid but not brilliant genius, who would turn his hand to the making out dockets, penning a manifesto, or scoring a tally, not the worse (I hope) for knowing Latin and Greek, and having in youth conversed with the philosophers. But from these follies I believe he is thoroughly awakened, and would bind himself by a terrible oath never to imagine himself an extraordinary genius again.

"Yours, &c.

"C. Lamb."

TO MR. RICKMAN.

"Dear Rickman—I send you some papers about a salt-water soap, for which the inventor is desirous of getting a parliamentary reward, like Dr. Jenner. Whether such a prospect be feasible, I mainly doubt, taking for granted the equal utility. I should suppose the usual way of paying such projectors is by way of patents and contracts. The patent, you see, he has got. A contract he is about with the navy board. Meantime, the projector is hungry. Will you answer me two questions, and return them with the papers as soon as you can? Imprimis, is there any chance of success in application to parliament for a reward? Did you ever hear of the invention? You see its benefits and saving to the nation (always the first motive with a true projector) are feelingly set forth: the last paragraph but one of the estimate, in enumerating the shifts poor seamen are put to, even approaches the pathetic. But, agreeing to all he says, is there the remotest chance of parliament giving the projector anything; and *when* should application be made, now or after a report (if he can get it) from the navy board? Secondly, let the infeasibility be as great as you will, you will oblige me by telling me the way of introducing such an application in parliament, without buying over a majority of members, which is totally out of projector's power. I vouch nothing for the soap myself; for I always wash in *fresh water*, and find it answer tolerably well for all purposes of cleanliness; nor do I know the projector; but a relation of mine has put me on writing to you, for whose parliamentary knowledge he has great veneration.

"P.S. The Captain and Mrs. Burney and Phillips take their chance at cribbage here on Wednesday. Will you and Mrs. R. join the party? Mary desires her compliments to Mrs. R., and joins in the invitation.

"Yours truly,

"C. LAMB.

"Monday."

Before the production of "MR. H.," Lamb was obliged, in sad earnest, to part from Manning, who, after talking and thinking about China for years, took the heroic resolution of going thither, not to acquire wealth or fame, but to realize the phantom of his restless thought. Happy was he to have a friend like Mr. Burney, to indulge and soften his grief, which he thus expresses in his first letter to his friend.

TO MR. MANNING.

"My dear Manning—I didn't know what your going was till I shook a last fist with you, and then 'twas just like having shaken hands with a wretch on the fatal scaffold; and, when you are down the ladder, you can never stretch out to him again. Mary says you are dead, and there's nothing to do but to leave it to time to do for us in the end what it always does for those who mourn for people in such a case. But she'll see by your letter you are not quite dead. A little kicking and agony, and then—. Martin Burney *took me out* a walking that evening, and we talked of Manning; and then I came home and smoked for you, and at twelve o'clock came home Mary and Monkey Louisy from the play, and there was more talk and more smoking, and they all seemed first-rate characters, because they knew a certain person. But what's the use of talking about 'em? By the time you'll have made your escape from the Kalmuks, you'll have stayed so long I shall never be able to bring to your mind who Mary was, who will have died about a year before, nor who the Holcrofts were! Me perhaps you will mistake for Phillips, or confound me with Mr. Dawe, because you saw us together. Mary (whom you seem to remember yet) is not quite easy that she had not a formal parting from you. I wish it had so happened. But you must bring her a token, a shawl or something, and remember a sprightly little mandarin for our mantelpiece, as a companion to the child I am going to purchase at the museum. She says you saw her writings about the other day, and she wishes you should know what they are. She is doing for Godwin's bookseller twenty of Shakspeare's plays, to be made into children's tales. Six are already done by her, to wit, 'The Tempest,' 'Winter's Tale,' 'Midsummer Night,' 'Much Ado,' 'Two Gentlemen of Verona,' and 'Cymbeline;' and the 'Merchant of Venice' is in forwardness. I have done 'Othello' and 'Macbeth,' and mean to do all the tragedies. I think it will be popular among the little people, besides money. It's to bring in sixty guineas. Mary has done them capitally, I think you'd think. These are the humble amusements we propose while you are gone to plant the cross of Christ among barbarous pagan anthropophagi. Quam homo homini præstat! but then, perhaps, you'll get murdered, and we shall die in our beds with a fair literary reputation. Be sure, if you see any of those people whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders, that you make a draught of them. It will be very curious. Oh! Manning, I am serious to sinking, almost, when I think that all those

evenings, which you have made so pleasant, are gone perhaps for ever. Four years you talk of may be ten, and you may come back and find such alterations! Some circumstances may grow up to you or to me that may be a bar to the return of any such intimacy. I dare say all this is hum! and that all will come back; but, indeed, we die many deaths before we die, and I am almost sick when I think that such a hold as I had of you is gone. I have friends, but some of 'em are changed. Marriage, or some circumstance, rises up to make them not the same. But I felt sure of you. And that last token you gave me of expressing a wish to have my name joined with yours, you know not how it affected me: like a legacy.

"God bless you in every way you can form a wish. May he give you health, and safety, and the accomplishment of all your objects, and return you again to us, to gladden some fireside or other (I suppose we shall be moved from the Temple). I will nurse the remembrance of your steadiness and quiet, which used to infuse something like itself into our nervous minds. Mary called you our ventilator. Farewell, and take her best wishes and mine.

"Good-by,
"C. L."

Christmas approached, and Lamb then conveyed to Manning, now at the antipodes, news of poor Holcroft's failure in his play of "The Vindictive Man," and his own approaching trial.

TO MR. MANNING.

"5th December, 1806.

"Manning, your letter dated Hottentots, August the what-was-it? came to hand. I can scarce hope that mine will have the same luck. China—Canton—bless us—how it strains the imagination and makes it ache! I write under another uncertainty whether it can go to-morrow by a ship which I have just learned is going off direct to your part of the world, or whether the despatches may not be sealed up, and this have to wait; for, if it is detained here, it will grow staler in a fortnight than in a five months' voyage coming to you. It will be a point of conscience to send you none but bran new news (the latest edition), which will but grow the better, like oranges for a sea voyage. Oh that you should be so many hemispheres off—if I speak incorrectly you can correct me—why the simplest death or marriage that takes place here must be important to you as news in the old Bastille. There's your

friend Tuthill has got away from France—you remember France? and Tuthill? ten to one but he writes by this post, if he don't get my note in time, apprizing him of the vessel sailing. Know, then, that he has found means to obtain leave from Bonaparte, without making use of any *incredible romantic pretences*, as some have done who never meant to fulfil them, to come home, and I have seen him here and at Holcroft's. An't you glad about Tuthill? Now, then, be sorry for Holcroft, whose new play, called 'The Vindictive Man,' was damned about a fortnight since. It died in part of its own weakness, and in part with being choked up with bad actors. The two principal parts were destined to Mrs. Jordan and Mr. Bannister, but Mrs. J. has not come to terms with the managers; they have had some squabble, and Bannister shot some of his fingers off by thegoing off of a gun. So Miss Duncan had her part, and Mr. De Camp took his. His part, the principal comic hope of the play, was most unluckily Goldfinch taken out of the 'Road to Ruin,' not only the same character, but the identical Goldfinch—the same as Falstaff is in two plays of Shakspeare—as the devil of ill-luck would have it, half the audience did not know that H. had written it, but were displeased at his stealing from the 'Road to Ruin;' and those who might have borne a gentlemanly coxcomb with his 'That's your sort,' 'Go it,' such as Lewis is, did not relish the intolerable vulgarity and inanity of the idea stripped of his manner. De Camp was hooted more than hissed, hooted and bellowed off the stage before the second act was finished, so that the remainder of his part was forced to be, with some violence to the play, omitted. In addition to this, a woman of the town was another principal character—a most unfortunate choice in this moral day. The audience were as scandalized as if you were to introduce such a personage to their private tea-tables. Besides, her action in the play was gross—wheedling an old man into marriage. But the mortal blunder of the play was that which, oddly enough, H. took pride in, and exultingly told me of the night before it came out, that there were no less than eleven principal characters in it, and I believe he meant of the men only, for the playbill expressed as much, not reckoning one woman—and true it was, for Mr. Powell, Mr. Raymond, Mr. Bartlett, Mr. H. Siddons, Mr. Barrymore, &c., &c., to the number of eleven, had all parts equally prominent, and there were as much of them in quantity and rank as of the hero and heroine—and most of them gentlemen who seldom appear but as the hero's friend in a farce, for a minute or two, and here they all had their ten minute speeches, and one of them gave the audience a serious

account how he was now a lawyer, but had been a poet, and then a long enumeration of the inconveniences of authorship, rascally booksellers, reviewers, &c., which first set the audience a gaping; but I have said enough. You will be so sorry, that you will not think the best of me for my detail; but news is news at Canton. Poor H., I fear, will feel the disappointment very seriously in a pecuniary light. What if he should be obliged to part with his long-necked Guido that hangs opposite as you enter, and the game-piece that hangs in the back drawing-room, and all those Vandycks, &c.? God should temper the wind to the shorn connoisseur. I hope I need not say to you that I feel for the weather-beaten author, and for all his household. I assure you his fate has soured a good deal the pleasure I should have otherwise taken in my own little farce being accepted, and, I hope, about to be acted —it is in rehearsal, actually, and I expect it to come out next week. It is kept a sort of secret, and the rehearsals have gone on privately, lest, by many folks knowing it, the story should come out, which would infallibly damn it. You remember I had it sent before you went. Wroughton read it, and was much pleased with it. I speedily got an answer. I took it to make alterations, and lazily kept it some months; then took courage, and furbished it up in a day or two, and took it. In less than a fortnight I heard the principal part was given to Elliston, who liked it, and only wanted a prologue, which I have since done and sent it; and I had a note the day before yesterday from the manager, Wroughton (bless his fat face—he is not a bad actor in some things), to say that I should be summoned to the rehearsal after the next, which next was to be yesterday. I had no idea it was so forward. I have had no trouble, attended no reading or rehearsal, made no interest; what a contrast to the usual parade of authors! But it is peculiar to modesty to do all things without noise or pomp! I have some suspicion it will appear in public on Wednesday next; for W. says in his note, it is so forward that, if wanted, it may come out next week, and a new melodrame is announced for every day till then; and a 'new farce is in rehearsal,' is put up in the bills. Now you'd like to know the subject. The title is 'Mr. H.,' no more; how simple, how taking! A great H sprawling over the playbill, and attracting eyes at every corner. The story is a coxcomb appearing at Bath, vastly rich—all the ladies dying for him—all bursting to know who he is—but he goes by no other name than Mr. H.; a curiosity like that of the dames of Strasburg about the man with the great nose. But I won't tell you any more about it. Yes I will; but I can't give you an idea how

I have done it. I'll just tell you that, after much vehement admiration, when his true name comes out, 'Hogsflesh,' all the women shun him, avoid him, and not one can be found to change their name for him—that's the idea—how flat it is here—but how whimsical in the farce! And only think how hard upon me it is that the ship is despatched to-morrow, and my triumph cannot be ascertained till the Wednesday after—but all China will ring of it by-and-by. N.B. (But this is a secret) The professor has got a tragedy coming out with the young Roscius in it, in January next, as we say, January last it will be with you—and though it is a profound secret now, as all his affairs are, it cannot be much of one by the time you read this. However, don't let it go any further. I understand there are dramatic exhibitions in China. One would not like to be forestalled. Do you find in all this stuff I have written anything like those feelings which one should send my old adventuring friend, that is gone to wander among Tartars, and may never come again? I don't—but your going away, and all about you is a threadbare topic. I have worn it out with thinking—it has come to me when I have been dull with anything, till my sadness has seemed more to have come from it than to have introduced it. I want you, you don't know how much—but, if I had you here in my European garret, we should talk over such stuff as I have written—so—those 'Tales from Shakspeare' are coming out, and Mary has begun a new work. Mr. Dawe is turned author, he has been in such a way lately—Dawe the painter, I mean—he sits and stands about at Holcroft's, and says nothing—then sighs, and leans his head on his hand. I took him to be in love—but it seems he was only meditating a work—'The life of Morland,' the young man is not used to composition. Rickman and Captain Burney are well; they assemble at my house pretty regularly of a Wednesday—a new institution. Like other great men, I have a public day, cribbage and pies, with Phillips and noisy ——.

"Good Heaven! what a bit only I've got left! how shall I squeeze all I know into this morsel! Coleridge is come home, and is going to turn lecturer on taste at the Royal Institution. I shall get £200 from the theatre if Mr. H. has a good run, and I hope £100 for the copyright. Nothing if it fails, and there never was a more ticklish thing. The whole depends on the manner in which the name is brought out, which I value myself on, as a *chef-d'œuvre*. How the paper grows less and less! In less than two minutes I shall cease to talk to you, and you may rave to the great Wall of China. N.B. Is there such a wall? Is it as big as Old London

Wall, by Bedlam? Have you met with a friend of mine, named Ball, at Canton? if you are acquainted, remember me kindly to him. N.B. If my little thing don't succeed, I shall easily survive, having, as it were, compared to H.'s venture, but a sixteenth in the lottery. Mary and I are to sit next the orchestra in the pit, next the dweedle-dees. She remembers you. You are more to us than five hundred farces, clappings, &c.

"Come back one day.

"C. LAMB."

Wednesday, 10th December, 1806, was the wished-for evening which decided the fate of "MR. H." on the boards of Drury. Great curiosity was excited by the announcement; the house was crowded to the ceiling; and the audience impatiently awaited the conclusion of the long, dull, intolerable opera of "The Travellers," by which it was preceded. At length Mr. Elliston, the hero of the farce, entered, gayly dressed, and in happiest spirits—enough, not too much, elated—and delivered the prologue with great vivacity and success. The farce began; at first it was much applauded; but the wit seemed wiredrawn; and when the curtain fell on the first act, the friends of the author began to fear. The second act dragged heavily on, as second acts of farces will do; a rout at Bath, peopled with ill-dressed and over-dressed actors and actresses, increased the disposition to yawn; and when the moment of disclosure came, and nothing worse than the name *Hogsflesh* was heard, the audience resented the long play on their curiosity, and would hear no more. Lamb, with his sister, sat, as he anticipated, in the front of the pit; and having joined in encoring the epilogue, the brilliancy of which injured the farce, he gave way with equal pliancy to the common feeling, and hissed and hooted as loudly as any of his neighbours. The next morning's playbill contained a veracious announcement, that "*the new farce of* MR. H., *performed for the first time last night, was received by an overflowing audience with universal applause, and will be repeated for the second time to-morrow;*" but the stage lamps never that morrow saw! Elliston would have tried it again; but Lamb saw at once that the case was hopeless, and consoled his friends with a century of puns for the wreck of his dramatic hopes.

CHAPTER IX.

[1807 to 1814.]

Letters to Manning, Montague, Wordsworth, and Coleridge.

From this period, the letters of Lamb which have been preserved are comparatively few, with reference to the years through which they are scattered. He began to write in earnest for the press, and the time thus occupied was withdrawn from his correspondents, while his thoughts and feelings were developed by a different excitement, and expressed in other forms. In the year 1807 the series of stories founded on the plays of Shakspeare, referred to in his last letter to Manning, was published; in which the outlines of his plots are happily brought within the apprehension of children, and his language preserved wherever it was possible to retain it; a fit counterpoise to these works addressed to the young understanding, to which Lamb still cherished the strong distaste which broke out in one of his previous letters. Of these tales, King Lear, Macbeth, Timon of Athens, Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, and Othello, are by Charles, and the others by Mary Lamb; hers being, as Lamb always insisted, the most felicitous, but all well adapted to infuse some sense of the nobleness of the poet's thoughts into the hearts of their little readers. Of two other works preparing for the press, he thus speaks in a letter, which bears date 26th February, 1808, addressed to Manning, at Canton, in reply to a letter received thence, in which Manning informed Lamb that he had consigned a parcel of silk to a Mr. Knox for him.

TO MR. MANNING.

"Dear Missionary—Your letters from the farthest ends of the world have arrived safe. Mary is very thankful for your remembrance of her; and, with the less suspicion of mercenariness, as the silk, the *symbolum materiale* of your friendship, has not yet appeared. I think Horace says somewhere, *nox longa*. I would not impute negligence or unhandsome delays to a person whom you have honoured with your confidence, but I have not heard of the silk or of Mr. Knox save by your letter. Maybe he expects the first advances! or, it may be, that he has not succeeded in getting the article on

shore, for it is among the *res prohibitæ et non nisi smuggle-ationis vià fruendæ*. But so it is, in the friendships between *wicked men*, the very expressions of their good-will cannot but be sinful. I suppose you know my farce was damned. The noise still rings in my ears. Was you ever in the pillory? being damned is something like that. A treaty of marriage is on foot between William Hazlitt and Miss Stoddart. Something about settlements only retards it. Little Fenwick (you don't see the connexion of ideas here, how the devil should you ?) is in the rules of the Fleet. Cruel creditors! operation of iniquitous laws! is Magna Charta, then, a mockery? Why, in general (here I suppose you to ask a question), my spirits are pretty good, but I have my depressions, black as a smith's beard, Vulcanic, Stygian. At such times I have recourse to a pipe, which is like not being at home to a dun; he comes again with tenfold bitterness the next day. (Mind, I am not in debt, I only borrow a similitude from others; it shows imagination.) I have done two books since the failure of my farce; they will both be out this summer. The one is a juvenile book, 'The Adventures of Ulysses,' intended to be an introduction to the reading of Telemachus! it is done out of the Odyssey, not from the Greek. I would not mislead you; nor yet from Pope's Odyssey, but from an older translation of one Chapman. The 'Shakspeare Tales' suggested the doing it. Godwin is, in both those cases, my bookseller. The other is done for Longman, and is 'Specimens of English Dramatic Poets contemporary with Shakspeare.' Specimens are becoming fashionable. We have 'Specimens of Ancient English Poets'—'Specimens of Modern English Poets'—'Specimens of Ancient English Prose Writers,' without end. They used to be called 'Beauties.' You have seen 'Beauties of Shakspeare?' so have many people that never saw any beauties in Shakspeare. Longman is to print it, and be at all the expense and risk, and I am to share the profits after all deductions, *i. e.*, a year or two hence I must pocket what they please to tell me is due to me. But the book is such as I am glad there should be. It is done out of old plays at the Museum, and out of Dodsley's collection, &c. It is to have notes. So I go creeping on since I was lamed with that cursed fall from off the top of Drury Lane Theatre into the pit, something more than a year ago. However, I have been free of the house ever since, and the house was pretty free with me upon that occasion. Hang 'em, how they hissed! it was not a hiss neither, but a sort of a frantic yell, like a congregation of mad geese, with roaring sometimes like bears, mows and mops like apes, sometimes snakes, that hissed me into mad-

ness. 'Twas like St. Anthony's temptations. Mercy on us, that God should give his favourite children, men, mouths to speak with, to discourse rationally, to promise smoothly, to flatter agreeably, to encourage warmly, to counsel wisely, to sing with, to drink with, and to kiss with, and that they should turn them into mouths of adders, bears, wolves, hyenas, and whistle like tempests, and emit breath through them like distillations of aspic poison, to asperse and vilify the innocent labours of their fellow-creatures who are desirous to please them! Heaven be pleased to make the teeth rot out of them all, therefore! Make them a reproach, and all that pass by them to loll out their tongue at them! Blind mouths! as Milton somewhere calls them. Do you like Braham's singing? The little Jew has bewitched me. I follow him like as the boys followed Tom the Piper. I was insensible to music till he gave me a new sense. Oh that you could go to the new opera of Kais to-night! 'Tis all about Eastern manners; it would just suit you. It describes the wild Arabs, wandering Egyptians, lying dervises, and all that sort of people, to a hair. You needn't ha' gone so far to see what you see, if you saw it as I do every night at Drury Lane Theatre. Braham's singing, when it is impassioned, is finer than Mrs. Siddon's, or Mr. Kemble's acting; and when it is not impassioned, it is as good as hearing a person of fine sense talking. The brave little Jew! I made a pun the other day, and palmed it upon Holcroft, who grinned like a Cheshire cat. (Why do cats grin in Cheshire? Because it was once a county palatine, and the cats cannot help laughing whenever they think of it, though I see no great joke in it.) I said that Holcroft said, being asked who were the best dramatic writers of the day, 'Hook and I.' Mr. Hook is author of several pieces, Tekeli, &c. You know what *hooks and eyes* are, don't you? Your letter had many things in it hard to be understood; the puns were ready and Swift-like; but don't you begin to be melancholy in the midst of Eastern customs! 'The mind does not easily conform to foreign usages, even in trifles: it requires something that it has been familiar with.' That begins one of Dr. Hawkesworth's papers in the Adventurer, and is, I think, as sensible a remark as ever fell from the doctor's mouth. White is at Christ's Hospital, a wit of the first magnitude, but had rather be thought a gentleman, like Congreve. You know Congreve's repulse, which he gave to Voltaire when he came to visit him as a *literary man*, that he wished to be considered only in the light of a private gentleman. I think the impertinent Frenchman was properly answered. I should just serve any member of the French

Institute in the same manner that wished to be introduced to me.

* * * * * *

"Does any one read at Canton? Lord Moira is president of the Westminster Library. I suppose you might have interest with Sir Joseph Banks to get to be president of any similar institution that should be set up at Canton. I think public reading-rooms the best mode of educating young men. Solitary reading is apt to give the headache. Besides, who knows that you *do* read? There are ten thousand institutions similar to the Royal Institution which have sprung up from it. There is the London Institution, the Southwark Institution, the Russell Square Rooms Institution, &c.—*College quasi Conlege*, a place where people read together. Wordsworth, the great poet, is coming to town; he is to have apartments in the Mansion House. Well, my dear Manning, talking cannot be infinite; I have said all I have to say; the rest is but remembrances, which we shall bear in our heads of you while we have heads. Here is a packet of trifles nothing worth; but it is a trifling part of the world where I live; emptiness abounds. But in fulness of affection we remain yours, C. L."

The two books referred to in this letter were shortly after published. "The Adventures of Ulysses" had some tinge of the quaintness of Chapman; it gives the plot of the earliest and one of the most charming of romances, without spoiling its interest. The "Specimens of English Dramatic Poets who lived about the Time of Shakspeare" were received with more favour than Lamb's previous works, though it was only by slow and imperceptible degrees that they won their way to the apprehensions of the most influential minds, and wrought out the genial purpose of the editor in renewing a taste for the great contemporaries of Shakspeare. "The Monthly Review" vouchsafed a notice* in its large print, upon the whole favourable, according to the existing fashion of criticism, but still "craftily qualified." It will scarcely be credited, without reference to the article itself, that on the notes the critic pronounces this judgment: "The notes before us indeed have nothing very remarkable, except the style, which is formally abrupt and elaborately quaint. Some of the most studied attempts to display excessive feeling we had noted for animadversion, but the task is unnecessary," &c.

It is easy to conceive of readers strongly dissenting from

* April, 1808.

some of the passionate eulogies of these notes, and even taking offence at the boldness of the allusions; but that any one should read these essences of criticism, suggesting the profoundest thoughts, and replete throughout with fine imagery, and find in them "nothing remarkable," is a mystery which puzzles us. But when the same critic speaks of the heroine of the "Broken Heart" as "the light-heeled Calantha," it is easy to appreciate his fitness for sitting in judgment on the old English drama and the congenial expositor of its grandeurs!

In this year Miss Lamb published her charming work, entitled "Mrs. Leicester's School," to which Lamb contributed three of the tales. The best, however, are his sister's, as he delighted to insist; and no tales more happily adapted to nurture all sweet and childlike feelings in children were ever written. Another joint publication, "Poetry for Children," followed, which also is worthy of its title.

Early in 1809 Lamb removed from Mitre-court Buildings to Southampton Buildings, but only for a few months, and preparatory to a settlement (which he meant to be final) in the Temple. The next letter to Manning (still in China), of 28th March, 1809, is from Southampton Buildings.

TO MR. MANNING.

"So there is one of your friends whom you will never see again! Perhaps the next fleet may bring you a letter from Martin Burney, to say that he writes by desire of Miss Lamb, who is not well enough to write herself, to inform you that her brother died on Thursday last, 14th June, &c. But I hope *not*. I should be sorry to give occasion to open a correspondence between Martin and you. This letter must be short, for I have driven it off to the very moment of doing up the packets; and besides, that which I refer to above is a very long one; and if you have received my books, you will have enough to do to read them. While I think on it, let me tell you we are moved. Don't come any more to Mitre-court Buildings. We are at 34 Southampton Buildings, Chancery-lane, and shall be here till about the end of May, then we remove to No. 4 Inner Temple-lane, where I mean to live and die; for I have such horror of moving, that I would not take a benefice from the king if I was not indulged with nonresidence. What a dislocation of comfort is comprised in that word moving! Such a heap of little nasty things, after you think all is got into the cart; old dredging-boxes, worn-out brushes, gallipots, vials, things that it is impossible the most necessitous person can ever want, but which the women, who

preside on these occasions, will not leave behind if it was to save your soul; they'd keep the cart ten minutes to stow in dirty pipes and broken matches, to show their economy. Then you can find nothing you want for many days after you get into your new lodgings. You must comb your hair with your fingers, wash your hands without soap, go about in dirty gaiters. Was I Diogenes, I would not move out of a kilderkin into a hogshead, though the first had nothing but small beer in it, and the second reeked claret. Our place of final destination—I don't mean the grave, but No. 4 Inner Temple-lane—looks out upon a gloomy churchyard-like court, called Hare Court, with three trees and a pump in it. Do you know it? I was born near it, and used to drink at that pump when I was a Rechabite of six years old. If you see newspapers you will read about Mrs. Clarke. The sensation in London about this nonsensical business is marvellous. I remember nothing in my life like it. Thousands of ballads, caricatures, lives of Mrs. Clarke, in every blind alley. Yet, in the midst of this stir, a sublime abstracted dancing-master, who attends a family we know at Kensington, being asked a question about the progress of the examinations in the House, inquired who Mrs. Clarke was? He had heard nothing of it. He had evaded this omnipresence by utter insignificancy! The duke should make that man his confidential valet. I proposed locking him up, barring him the use of his fiddle and red pumps, until he had minutely perused and committed to memory the whole body of the examinations, which employed the House of Commons a fortnight, to teach him to be more attentive to what concerns the public. I think I told you of Godwin's little book and of Coleridge's prospectus in my last; if I did not, remind me of it, and I will send you them, or an account of them, next fleet. I have no conveniency of doing it by this. Mrs. —— grows every day in disfavour with me. I will be buried with this inscription over me:—'Here lies C. L., the woman-hater:' I mean, that hated one woman: for the rest, God bless them! How do you like the Mandarinesses? Are you on some little footing with any of them? This is Wednesday. On Wednesdays is my levee. The captain, Martin, Phillips (not the sheriff), Rickman, and some more, are constant attendants, besides stray visiters. We play at whist, eat cold meat and hot potatoes, and any gentleman that chooses smokes. Why do you never drop in? You'll come some day, won't you?

"C. Lamb, &c."

His next is after his removal to the Temple.

TO MR. MANNING.

"Dear Manning—When I last wrote you I was in lodgings. I am now in chambers, No. 4 Inner Temple-lane, where I should be happy to see you any evening. Bring any of your friends, the Mandarins, with you. I have two sitting-rooms: I call them so *par excellence*, for you may stand, or loll, or lean, or try any posture in them, but they are best for sitting; not squatting down Japanese fashion, but the more decorous mode which European usage has consecrated. I have two of these rooms on the third floor, and five sleeping, cooking, &c. rooms on the fourth floor. In my best room is a choice collection of the works of Hogarth, an English painter, of some humour. In my next best are shelves containing a small but well-chosen library. My best room commands a court, in which there are trees and a pump, the water of which is excellent cold with brandy, and not very insipid without. Here I hope to set up my rest, and not quit till Mr. Powell, the undertaker, gives me notice that I may have possession of my last lodging. He lets lodgings for single gentlemen. I sent you a parcel of books by my last to give you some idea of the state of European literature. There comes with this two volumes, done up as letters, of minor poetry, a sequel to Mrs. 'Leicester;' the best you may suppose mine; the next best are my coadjutor's; you may amuse yourself in guessing them out; but I must tell you mine are but one third in quantity of the whole. So much for a very delicate subject. It is hard to speak of one's self, &c. Holcroft had finished his life when I wrote to you, and Hazlitt has since finished his life; I do not mean his own life, but he has finished a life of Holcroft, which is going to press. Tuthill is Doctor Tuthill. I continue Mr. Lamb. I have published a little book for children on titles of honour; and, to give them some idea of the difference of rank and gradual rising, I have made a little scale, supposing myself to receive the following various accessions of dignity from the king, who is the fountain of honour—As at first, 1. Mr. C. Lamb; 2. C. Lamb, Esq.; 3. Sir C. Lamb, Bart.; 4. Baron Lamb of Stamford;* 5. Viscount Lamb; 6. Earl Lamb; 7. Marquis Lamb; 8. Duke Lamb. It would look like quibbling to carry it on further, and especially as it is not necessary for children to go beyond the ordinary titles of sub-regal dignity in our own country, otherwise I have sometimes in my dreams imagined myself still advancing, as 9th, King Lamb; 10th, Emperor Lamb; 11th,

* "Where my family came from. I have chosen that if ever I should have my choice."

Pope Innocent, higher than which is nothing. Puns I have not made many (nor punch much) since the date of my last; one I cannot help relating. A constable in Salisbury Cathedral was telling me that eight people dined at the top of the spire of the cathedral, upon which I remarked that they must be very sharp set. But, in general, I cultivate the reasoning part of my mind more than the imaginative. I am stuffed out so with eating turkey for dinner, and another turkey for supper yesterday (Turkey in Europe and Turkey in Asia), that I can't jog on. It is Newyear here. That is, it was Newyear half a year back, when I was writing this. Nothing puzzles me more than time and space, and yet nothing puzzles me less, for I never think about them. The Persian ambassador is the principal thing talked of now. I sent some people to see him worship the sun on Primrose Hill, at half past six in the morning, 28th November; but he did not come, which makes me think the old fire-worshippers are a sect almost extinct in Persia. The Persian ambassador's name is Shaw Ali Mirza. The common people call him Shaw Nonsense. While I think of it, I have put three letters besides my own three into the India post for you, from your brother, sister, and some gentleman whose name I forget. Will they, have they, did they, come safe? The distance you are at cuts up tenses by the root. I think you said you did not know Kate *********. I express her by nine stars, though she is but one. You must have seen her at her father's. Try and remember her. Coleridge is bringing out a paper in weekly numbers, called the 'Friend,' which I would send if I could; but the difficulty I had in getting the packets of books out to you before deters me; and you'll want something new to read when you come home. Except Kate, I have had no vision of excellence this year, and she passed by like the queen on her coronation day; you don't know whether you saw her or not. Kate is fifteen; I go about moping, and sing the old pathetic ballad I used to like in my youth—

'She's sweet fifteen,
I'm *one year more.*'

"Mrs. Bland sung it in boy's clothes the first time I heard it. I sometimes think the lower notes in my voice are like Mrs. Bland's. That glorious singer, Braham, one of my lights, is fled. He was for a season. He was a rare composition of the Jew, the gentleman, and the angel, yet all these elements mixed up so kindly in him, that you could not tell which preponderated; but he is gone, and one —— is engaged instead. Kate is vanished, but Miss B—— is always to be met with!

'Queens drop away, while blue-legg'd Maukin thrives;
And courtly Mildred dies while country Madge survives.'

That is not my poetry, but Quarles's; but haven't you observed that the rarest things are the least obvious? Don't show anybody the names in this letter. I write confidentially, and wish this letter to be considered as *private*. Hazlitt has written a *grammar* for Godwin; Godwin sells it bound up with a treatise of his own on language, but the *gray mare is the better horse*. I don't allude to Mrs. ——, but to the word *grammar*, which comes near to *gray mare*, if you observe, in sound. That figure is called paranomasia in Greek. I am sometimes happy in it. An old woman begged of me for charity. 'Ah! sir,' said she, 'I have seen better days.' 'So have I, good woman,' I replied; but I meant literally, days not so rainy and overcast as that on which she begged: she meant more prosperous days. Mr. Dawe is made associate of the Royal Academy, by what law of association I can't guess. Mrs. Holcroft, Miss Holcroft, Mr. and Mrs. Godwin, Mr. and Mrs. Hazlitt, Mrs. Martin and Louisa, Mrs. Lum, Capt. Burney, Mrs. Burney, Martin Burney, Mr. Rickman, Mrs. Rickman, Dr. Stoddart, William Dollin, Mr. Thompson, Mr. and Mrs. Norris, Mr. Fenwick, Mrs. Fenwick, Miss Fenwick, a man that saw you at our house one day, and a lady that heard me speak of you; Mrs Buffam that heard Hazlitt mention you, Dr. Tuthill, Mrs. Tuthill, Colonel Harwood, Mrs. Harwood, Mr. Collier, Mrs. Collier, Mr. Sutton, Nurse, Mr. Fell, Mrs. Fell, Mr. Marshall, are very well, and occasionally inquire after you.

"I remain yours ever,
"CH. LAMB.

"2d January, 1810."

In the summer of 1810 Lamb and his sister spent their holydays with Hazlitt, who, having married Miss Stoddart, was living in a house belonging to his wife's family at Winterslow, on the border of Salisbury Plain. The following letter, of 12th July in this year, was addressed to Mr. Montague, who had urged him to employ a part of his leisure in a compilation.

TO MR. MONTAGUE.

"Dear Montague—I have turned and twisted the MSS. in my head, and can make nothing of them. I knew when I took them that I could not, but I do not like to do an act of ungracious necessity at once; so I am ever committing myself by half engagements and total failures. I cannot make any-

body understand why I can't do such things; it is a defect in my occiput. I cannot put other people's thoughts together; I forget every paragraph as fast as I read it; and my head has received such a shock by an all-night journey on the top of the coach, that I shall have enough to do to nurse it into its natural pace before I go home. I must devote myself to imbecility; I must be gloriously useless while I stay here. How is Mrs. M.? will she pardon my inefficiency? The city of Salisbury is full of weeping and wailing. The bank has stopped payment; and everybody in the town kept money at it, or has got some of its notes. Some have lost all they had in the world. It is the next thing to seeing a city with the plague within its walls. The Wilton people are all undone; all the manufacturers there kept cash at the Salisbury bank; and I do suppose it to be the unhappiest county in England this, where I am making holyday. We purpose setting out for Oxford Tuesday fortnight, and coming thereby home. But no more night travelling. My head is sore (understand it of the inside) with that deduction from my natural rest which I suffered coming down. Neither Mary nor I can spare a morsel of our rest; it is incumbent on us to be misers of it. Travelling is not good for us, we travel so seldom. If the sun be hell, it is not for the fire, but for the sempiternal motion of that miserable body of light. How much more dignified leisure hath a muscle, glued to his unpassable rocky limit, two inches square! He hears the tide roll over him, backward and forward, twice a day (as the Salisbury long coach goes and returns in forty-eight hours), but knows better than to take an outside night-place a top on't. He is the owl of the sea—Minerva's fish—the fish of wisdom.

"Our kindest remembrances to Mrs. M.

"Yours truly,

"C. LAMB."

The following is Lamb's postscript to a letter of Miss Lamb to Miss Wordsworth, after their return to London:

"Mary has left a little space for me to fill up with nonsense, as the geographers used to cram monsters in the voids of the maps, and call it Terra Incognita. She has told you how she has taken to water like a hungry otter. I too limp after her in lame imitation, but it goes against me a little at first. I have been acquaintance with it now for full four days, and it seems a moon. I am full of cramps, and rheumatisms, and cold internally, so that fire won't warm me; yet I bear all for virtue's sake. Must I then leave you, gin, rum, brandy,

aquavitæ, pleasant jolly fellows? Hang temperance and he that first invented it! some Anti-Noahite. C—— has powdered his head, and looks like Bacchus, Bacchus ever sleek and young. He is going to turn sober, but his clock has not struck yet; meantime he pours down goblet after goblet, the second to see where the first is gone, the third to see no harm happens to the second, a fourth to say there is another coming, and a fifth to say he is not sure he is the last."

In the autumn of this year, the establishment of a Quarterly Magazine, entitled the "Reflector," opened a new sphere for Lamb's powers as a humourist and critic. Its editor, Mr. Leigh Hunt, having been educated in the same school, enjoyed many associations and friendships in common with him, and was thus able to excite in Lamb the greatest motive for exertion in the zeal of kindness. In this magazine appeared some of Lamb's noblest effusions; his essay "On Garrick and Acting," which contains the character of Lear, perhaps the noblest criticism ever written, and on the noblest human subject; his delightful "Essays on Hogarth;" his "Farewell to Tobacco," and several of the choicest of his gayer pieces.

The number of the Quarterly Review for December, 1811, contained an attack upon Lamb, which it would be difficult, as well as painful, to characterize as it deserves. Mr. Weber, in his edition of "Faust," had extracted Lamb's note on the catastrophe of "The Broken Heart," in which Lamb, speaking of that which he regarded as the highest exhibition of tragic suffering which human genius had depicted, dared an illusion which was perhaps too bold for those who did not understand the peculiar feeling by which it was suggested, but which no unprejudiced mind could mistake for the breathing of other than a pious spirit. In reviewing Mr. Weber, the critic, who was also the editor of the Review, thus complains of the quotation—"We have a more serious charge to bring against the editor than the omission of points, or the misapprehension of words. He has polluted his pages with the blasphemies *of a poor maniac*, who, it seems, once published some detached scenes of the 'Broken Heart.' For this unfortunate creature every feeling mind will find an apology in his calamitous situation; but for Mr. Weber, we know not where the warmest of his friends will find palliation or excuse." It would be unjust to attribute this paragraph to the accidental association of Lamb in literary undertakings with persons like Mr. Hunt, strongly opposed to the political opinions of Mr. Gifford. It seems rather the peculiar expression of the distaste of a small though acute mind for an original

power which it could not appreciate, and which disturbed the conventional associations of which it was master, aggravated by bodily weakness and disease. Notwithstanding this attack, Lamb was prompted by his admiration for Wordsworth's "Excursion" to contribute a review of that work, on its appearance, to the Quarterly, and he anticipated great pleasure in the poet's approval of his criticism; but, when the review appeared, the article was so mercilessly mangled by the editor, that Lamb entreated Wordsworth not to read it. For these grievances Lamb at length took a very gentle revenge in the following

SONNET.

SAINT CRISPIN TO MR. GIFFORD.

All unadvised, and in an evil hour,
Lured by aspiring thoughts, my son, you daft
The lowly labours of the "Gentle Craft"
For learned toils, which blood and spirits sour.
All things, dear pledge, are not in all men's power
The wiser sort of shrub affects the ground;
And sweet content of mind is oftener found
In cobbler's parlour than in critic's bower.
The sorest work is what doth cross the grain;
And better to this hour you had been plying
The obsequious awl, with well-waxed finger flying,
Than ceaseless thus to till a thankless vein:
Still teasing muses which are still denying;
Making a stretching-leather of your brain.

St. Crispin's Eve.

Lamb, as we have seen, cared nothing for politics; yet his desire to serve his friends sometimes induced him to adopt for a short time their view of public affairs, and assist them with a harmless pleasantry. The following epigram on the disappointment of the whig associates of the regent appeared in the "Examiner."

Ye politicians, tell me, pray,
While thus with wo and care rent?
This is the worst that you can say,
Some wind has blown the *Wig* away,
And left the *Hair Apparent.*

The following, also published in the same paper, would probably have only caused a smile if read by the regent himself, and may now be republished without offence to any one. At the time when he wrote it, Lamb used to stop any passionate attacks upon the prince with the smiling remark, "*I* love my regent."

THE TRIUMPH OF THE WHALE.

Io! Pæan! Io! sing,
To the finny people's king,
Not a mightier whale than this
In the vast Atlantic is,
Not a fatter fish than he
Flounders round the Polar Sea.
See his blubber—at his gills
What a world of drink he swills!
From his trunk, as from a spout,
Which next moment he pours out.
Such his person. Next declare,
Muse, who his companions are:
Every fish of generous kind
Scuds aside, or slinks behind;
But about his presence keep
All the monsters of the deep;
Mermaids, with their tails and singing,
His delighted fancy stinging;
Crooked dolphins, they surround him;
Doglike seals, they fawn around him;
Following hard, the progress mark
Of the intolerant salt sea shark;
For his solace and relief,
Flatfish are his courtiers chief;
Last and lowest in his train,
Inkfish (libellers of the main),
Their black liquor shed in spite:
(Such on earth *the things that write.*)
In his stomach, some do say,
No good thing can ever stay:
Had it been the fortune of it
To have swallow'd that old prophet,
Three days there he'd not have dwell'd,
But in one have been expell'd.
Hapless mariners are they,
Who, beguiled (as seamen say),
Deeming him some rock or island,
Footing sure, safe spot, and dry land,
Anchor in his scaly rind—
Soon the difference they find;
Sudden plumb! he sinks beneath them,
Does to ruthless seas bequeath them.
Name or title what has he?
Is he Regent of the Sea?
From this difficulty free us,
Buffon, Banks, or sage Linnæus,
With his wondrous attributes,
Say, what appellation suits?
By his bulk, and by his size,
By his oily qualities,
This (or else my eyesight fails),
This should be the Prince of Whales.

The devastation of the Park in the summer of 1814, by reason of the rejoicings on the visit of the allied sovereigns, produced the following letter from Lamb to Wordsworth.

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

"Save for a late excursion to Harrow, and a day or two

on the banks of the Thames this summer, rural images were fast fading from my mind, and by the wise provision of the regent all that was countryfied in the parks is just obliterated. The very colour of green is vanished, the whole surface of Hyde Park is dry crumbling sand (Arabia Arenosa), not a vestige or hint of grass ever having grown there; booths and drinking-places go all round it, for a mile and a half I am confident—I might say two miles, in circuit—the stench of liquors, *bad* tobacco, dirty people, and provisions, conquers the air, and we are all stifled and suffocated in Hyde Park. Order after order has been issued by Lord Sidmouth in the name of the regent (acting in behalf of his royal father) for the dispersion of the varlets, but in vain. The *vis unita* of all the publicans in London, Westminster, Marylebone, and miles round, is too powerful a force to put down. The regent has raised a phantom which he cannot lay. There they'll stay, probably, for ever. The whole beauty of the place is gone—that lake-look of the Serpentine—it has got foolish ships upon it—but something whispers to have confidence in nature and its revival—

> At the coming of the *milder day*,
> These monuments shall all be overgrown.

Meantime I confess to have smoked one delicious pipe in one of the cleanliest and goodliest of the booths; a tent rather—

> 'Oh call it not a booth!'

erected by the public spirit of Watson, who keeps the Adam and Eve at Pancras (the alehouses have all emigrated, with their train of bottles, mugs, corkscrews, waiters, into Hyde Park—whole alehouses with all their ale!), in company with some of the Guards that had been in France, and a fine French girl, habited like a princess of banditti, which one of the dogs had transported from the Garonne to the Serpentine. The unusual scene in Hyde Park, by candlelight, in open air, good tobacco, bottled stout, made it look like an interval in a campaign, a repose after battle. I almost fancied scars smarting, and was ready to club a story with my comrades of some of my lying deeds. After all, the fireworks were splendid; the rockets in clusters, in trees, and all shapes, spreading about like young stars in the making, floundering about in space (like unbroke horses), till some of Newton's calculations should fix them; but then they went out. Any one who could see 'em, and the still finer showers of gloomy rain-fire that fell sulkily and angrily from 'em, and could go to bed without dreaming of the last day, must be a hardened atheist.

"Again let me thank you for your present, and assure you

that fireworks and triumphs have not distracted me from receiving a calm and noble enjoyment from it (which I trust I shall often), and I sincerely congratulate you on its appearance.

"With kindest remembrances to you and household, we remain yours sincerely,

"C. LAMB and Sister.

"9th August, 1814."

The following are fragments of letters to Coleridge in the same month. The first is in answer to a solicitation of Coleridge for a supply of German books.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"13th Aug., 1814.

"Dear Resuscitate—There comes to you by the vehicle from Ladlane this day a volume of German; what it is I cannot justly say, the characters of those northern nations having been always singularly harsh and unpleasant to me. It is a contribution of Dr. —— towards your wants, and you would have had it sooner but for an odd accident. I wrote for it three days ago, and the doctor, as he thought, sent it me. A book of like exterior he did send, but, being disclosed, how far unlike! It was the 'Well-bred Scholar,' a book with which, it seems, the doctor laudably fills up those hours which he can steal from his medical avocations (Chesterfield, Blair, Beattie, portions from 'The Life of Savage,' make up a prettyish system of morality and the belles lettres, which Mr. Mylne, a schoolmaster, has properly brought together, and calls the collection by the denomination above mentioned); the doctor had no sooner discovered his error, than he despatched man and horse to rectify the mistake, and, with a pretty kind of ingenuous modesty in his note, seemeth to deny any knowledge of the 'Well-bred Scholar;' false modesty, surely, and a blush misplaced; for what more pleasing than the consideration of professional austerity thus relaxing, thus improving! But so, when a child, I remember blushing, being caught on my knees, or doing otherwise some pious and praiseworthy action: *now* I rather love such things to be seen. Henry Crabb Robinson is out upon his circuit, and his books are inaccessible without his leave and key. He is attending the Norfolk Circuit—a short term, but to him, as to many young lawyers, a long vacation, sufficiently dreary.* I thought I could do no better than transmit to him, not extracts, but your very letter itself, than which I think I never read anything more moving, more

* A mistake of Lamb's, at which the excellent person referred to may smile, now that he has retired from his profession, and has no business but the offices of kindness.

pathetic, or more conducive to the purpose of persuasion. The Crab is a sour Crab if it does not sweeten him. I think it would draw another third volume of Dodsley out of me; but you say you don't want any English books? Perhaps, after all, that's as well; one's romantic credulity is for ever misleading one into misplaced acts of foolery. Crab might have answered by this time; his juices take a long time supplying, but they'll run at last—I know they will—pure golden pippin. A fearful rumour has since reached me that the Crab is on the eve of setting out for France. If he is in England your letter will reach him, and I flatter myself a touch of the persuasive of my own, which accompanies it, will not be thrown away: if it be, he is a sloe, and no true-hearted crab, and there's an end. For that life of the German conjuror which you speak of, 'Colerus de Vitâ Doctoris vix-Intelligibilis,' I perfectly remember the last evening we spent with Mrs. M—— and Miss B——, in London-street (by that token we had rabbits for supper, and Miss B—— prevailed upon me to take a glass of brandy and water after supper, which is not my habit)—I perfectly remember reading portions of that life in their parlour, and I think it must be among their packages. It was the very last evening we were at that house. What is gone of that frankhearted circle, M——, and his gos-lettuces? He ate walnuts better than any man I ever knew. Friendships in these parts stagnate.

* * * * * *

"I am going to eat turbot, turtle, venison, marrow pudd.—cold punch, claret, Madeira—at our annual feast, at half past four this day. They keep bothering me (I'm in office), and my ideas are confused. Let me know if I can be of any service as to books. God forbid the Architectonican should be sacrificed to a foolish scruple of some book-proprietor, as if books did not belong with the highest propriety to those that understand 'em best. C. LAMB."

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"26th August, 1814.

"Let the hungry soul rejoice, there is corn in Egypt. Whatever thou hast been told to the contrary by designing friends, who perhaps inquired carelessly, or did not inquire at all, in hope of saving their money, there is a stock of 'Remorse' on hand, enough, as Pople conjectures, for seven years' consumption, judging from experience of the last two years. Methinks it makes for the benefit of sound literature, that the best books do not always go off best. Inquire in seven years' time for the 'Rokebys' and the 'Laras,' and where shall they

be found?—fluttering fragmentally in some thread-paper; whereas thy 'Wallenstein' and thy 'Remorse' are safe on Longman's or Pople's shelves, as in some Bodleian, there they shall remain; no need of a chain to hold them fast—perhaps for ages—tall copies—and people sha'n't run about hunting for them as in old Ezra's shrievalty they did for a Bible, almost without effect, till the great-great-grand-niece (by the mother's side) of Jeremiah or Ezekiel (which was it?) remembered something of a book, with odd reading in it, that used to lie in the green closet in her aunt Judith's bed-chamber.

"Thy caterer, Price, was at Hamburgh when last Pople heard of him, laying up for thee like some miserly old father for his generous-hearted son to squander.

"Mr. Charles Aders, whose books also pant for that free circulation which thy custody is sure to give them, is to be heard of at his kinsmen, Messrs. Jameson and Aders, No. 7 Laurence Pountney-lane, London, according to the information which Crabius with his parting breath left me. Crabius is gone to Paris. I prophesy he and the Parisians will part with mutual contempt. His head has a twist Allemagne, like thine, dear mystic.

"I have been reading Madame Stael on Germany. An impudent clever woman. But if 'Faust' be no better than in her abstract of it, I counsel thee to let it alone. How canst thou translate the language of cat-monkeys? Fy on such fantasies! But I will not forget to look for Proclus. It is a kind of book, when one meets with it, one shuts the lid faster than one opened it. Yet I have some bastard kind of recollection that somewhere, some time ago, upon some stall or other, I saw it. It was either that, or Plotinus, or Saint Augustine's 'City of God.' So little do some folks value what to others, *sc.* to you, 'well used,' had been the 'Pledge of Immortality.' Bishop Bruno I never touched upon. Stuffing too good for the brains of such 'a Hare' as thou describest. May it burst his pericranium, as the gobbets of fat and turpentine (a nasty thought of the seer) did that old dragon in the Apocrypha! May he go mad in trying to understand his author! May he lend the third volume of him before he has quite translated the second, to a friend who shall lose it, and so spoil the publication, and his friend find it and send it him just as thou or some such less dilatory spirit shall have announced the whole for the press; lastly, may he be hunted by reviewers, and the devil jug him! Canst think of any other queries in the solution of which I can give thee satisfaction? Do you want any books that I can procure for you? Old Jimmy Boyer is dead

at last. Trollope has got his living, worth 1000*l.* a year nett. See, thou sluggard, thou heretic sluggard, what mightst thou not have arrived at. Lay thy animosity against Jimmy in the grave. Do not *entail* it on thy posterity.

"CHARLES LAMB."

CHAPTER X.

[1815 to 1817.]

Letters to Wordsworth, Southey, and Manning.

It was at the beginning of the year 1815 that I had first the happiness of a personal acquaintance with Mr. Lamb. With his scattered essays and poems I had become familiar a few weeks before, through the instrumentality of Mr. Barron Field, now chief-justice of Gibraltar, who had been brought into close intimacy with Lamb by the association of his own family with Christ's Hospital, of which his father was the surgeon, and by his own participation in the "Reflector." Living then in chambers in Inner Temple-lane, and attending those of Mr. Chitty, the special pleader, which were on the next staircase to Mr. Lamb's, I had been possessed some time by a desire to become acquainted with the writings of my gifted neighbour, which my friend was able only partially to gratify. "John Woodvil," and the number of the "Reflector" enriched with Lamb's article, he indeed lent me, but he had no copy of "Rosamund Gray," which I was most anxious to read, and which, after earnest search through all the bookstalls within the scope of my walks, I found, exhibiting proper marks of due appreciation, in the store of a little circulating library near Holborn. There was something in this little romance so entirely new, yet breathing the air of old acquaintance; a sense of beauty so delicate and so intense; and a morality so benignant and so profound, that, as I read it, my curiosity to see its author rose almost to the height of pain. The commencement of the new year brought me that gratification; I was invited to meet Lamb at dinner, at the house of Mr. William Evans, a gentleman holding an office in the India House, who then lived in Weymouth-street, and who was a proprietor of the "Pamphleteer," to which I had contributed some idle scribblings. My duties at the office did not allow me to avail myself of this invitation to dinner,

but I went up at ten o'clock, through a deep snow, palpably congealing into ice, and was amply repaid when I reached the hospitable abode of my friend. There was Lamb, preparing to depart, but he stayed half an hour in kindness to me, and then accompanied me to our common home—the Temple.

Methinks I see him before me now, as he appeared then, and as he continued, with scarcely any perceptible alteration to me, during the twenty years of intimacy which followed, and were closed by his death. A light frame, so fragile that it seemed as if a breath would overthrow it, clad in clerklike black, was surmounted by a head of form and expression the most noble and sweet. His black hair curled crisply about an expanded forehead; his eyes, softly brown, twinkled with varying expression, though the prevalent feeling was sad; and the nose slightly curved, and delicately carved at the nostril, with the lower outline of the face regularly oval, completed a head which was finely placed on the shoulders, and gave importance, and even dignity, to a diminutive and shadowy stem. Who shall describe his countenance—catch its quivering sweetness—and fix it for ever in words? There are none, alas! to answer the vain desire of friendship. Deep thought, striving with humour; the lines of suffering wreathed into cordial mirth; and a smile of painful sweetness, present an image to the mind it can as little describe as lose. His personal appearance and manner are not unfitly characterized by what he himself says in one of his letters to Manning of Braham—"a compound of the Jew, the gentleman, and the angel." He took my arm, and we walked to the Temple, Lamb stammering out fine remarks as we walked; and when we reached his staircase, he detained me with an urgency which would not be denied, and we mounted to the top story, where an old petted servant, called Becky, was ready to receive us. We were soon seated beside a cheerful fire; hot water and its better adjuncts were before us; and Lamb insisted on my sitting with him while he smoked "one pipe," for—alas! for poor human nature—he had resumed his acquaintance with his "fair traitress." How often the pipe and the glasses were replenished, I will not undertake to disclose; but I can never forget the conversation; though the first, it was more solemn and in higher mood than any I ever after had with Lamb through the whole of our friendship. How it took such a turn between two strangers, one of them a lad of not quite twenty, I cannot tell; but so it happened. We discoursed then of life and death, and our anticipation of a world beyond the grave. Lamb spoke of

these awful themes with the simplest piety, but expressed his own fond cleavings to life—to all well-known accustomed things—and a shivering (not shuddering) sense of that which is to come, which he so finely indicated in his "Newyear's Eve" years afterward. It was two o'clock before we parted, when Lamb gave me a hearty invitation to renew my visit at pleasure; but two or three months elapsed before I saw him again. In the mean time, a number of the "Pamphleteer" contained an "Essay on the Chief Living Poets," among whom on the title appeared the name of Lamb, and some page or two were expressly devoted to his praises. It was a poor tissue of tawdry eulogies—a shallow outpouring of young enthusiasm in fine words, which it mistakes for thoughts—yet it gave Lamb, who had hitherto received scarcely civil notice from reviewers, great pleasure to find that any one recognised him as having a place among poets. The next time I saw him, he came almost breathless into the office, and proposed to give me what I should have chosen as the greatest of all possible honours and delights—an introduction to Wordsworth, who, I learned, with a palpitating heart, was actually at the next door. I hurried out with my kind conductor, and a minute after was presented by Lamb to the person whom in all the world I venerated most, with this preface:—"Wordsworth, give me leave to introduce to you my only admirer."

The following letter was addressed to Wordsworth after his return to Westmoreland from this visit:—

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

"9th Aug., 1815.

"Dear Wordsworth—Mary and I felt quite queer after your taking leave (you W. W.) of us in St. Giles's. We wished we had seen more of you, but felt we had scarce been sufficiently acknowledging for the share we had enjoyed of your company. We felt as if we had been not enough *expressive* of our pleasure. But our manners *both* are a little too much on this side of too-much-cordialty. We want presence of mind and presence of heart. What we feel comes too late, like an after-thought impromptu. But perhaps you observed nothing of that which we have been painfully conscious of, and are every day in our intercourse with those we stand affected to through all the degrees of love. Robinson is on the circuit—our panegyrist I thought had forgotten one of the objects of his youthful admiration, but I was agreeably removed from that scruple by the laundress knocking at my door this morning, almost before I was up, with a present of

fruit from my young friend, &c. There is something inexpressibly pleasant to me in these *presents*, be it fruit, or fowl, or brawn, or *what not*. Books are a legitimate cause of acceptance. If presents be not the soul of friendship, undoubtedly they are the most spiritual part of the body of that intercourse. There is too much narrowness of thinking in this point. The punctilio of acceptance, methinks, is too confined and strait-laced. I could be content to receive money, or clothes, or a joint of meat from a friend. Why should he not send me a dinner as well as a dessert? I would taste him in the beasts of the field, and through all creation. Therefore did the basket of fruit of the juvenile Talfourd not displease me; not that I have any thoughts of bartering or reciprocating these things. To send him anything in return would be to reflect suspicion of mercinariness upon what I know he meant a free-will offering. Let him overcome me in bounty. In this strife a generous nature loves to be overcome. You wish me some of your leisure. I have a glimmering aspect, a chink-light of liberty before me, which, I pray God, prove not fallacious. My remonstrances have stirred up others to remonstrate, and, altogether, there is a plan for separating certain parts of business from our department; which, if it take place, will produce me more time, *i. e.*, my evenings free. It may be a means of placing me in a more conspicuous situation, which will knock at my nerves another way, but I wait the issue in submission. If I can but begin my own day at four o'clock in the afternoon, I shall think myself to have Eden days of peace and liberty to what I have had. As you say, how a man can fill three volumes up with an essay on the drama is wonderful; I am sure a very few sheets would hold all I had to say on the subject.

* * * * * *

Did you ever read 'Charon on Wisdom?' or 'Patrick's Pilgrim?' If neither, you have two great pleasures to come. I mean some day to attack Caryl on Job, six folios. What any man can write, surely I may read. If I do but get rid of auditing warehouse-keeper's accounts, and get no worse-harassing task in the place of it, what a lord of liberty I shall be! I shall dance, and skip, and make mouths at the invisible event, and pick the thorns out of my pillow, and throw 'em at rich men's nightcaps, and talk blank verse, hoity, toity, and sing—'A clerk I was in London gay,' 'Ban, ban, Ca-Caliban,' like the emancipated monster, and go where I like, up this street or down that alley. Adieu, and pray that it may be my luck.

"Good-by to you all. C. LAMB."

The following letter was enclosed in the same parcel with the last.

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

"1815.

"Dear Southey—Robinson is not on the circuit, as I erroneously stated in a letter to W. W., which travels with this, but is gone to Brussels, Ostend, Ghent, &c. But his friends, the Colliers, whom I consulted respecting your friend's fate, remember to have heard him say that Father Pardo had effected his escape (the cunning greasy rogue), and, to the best of their belief, is at present in Paris. To my thinking, it is a small matter whether there be one fat friar more or less in the world. I have rather a taste for clerical executions, imbibed from early recollections of the fate of the excellent Dodd. I hear Bonaparte has sued his habeas corpus, and the twelve judges are now sitting upon it at the Rolls.

"Your boute-feu (bonfire) must be excellent of its kind. Poet Settle presided at the last great thing of the kind in London, when the pope was burnt in form. Do you provide any verses on this occasion? Your fear for Hartley's intellectuals is just and rational. Could not the chancellor be petitioned to remove him? His lordship took Mr. Betty from under the paternal wing. I think, at least, he should go through a course of matter-of-fact with some sober man after the mysteries. Could not he spend a week at Poole's before he goes back to Oxford? Tobin is dead. But there is a man in my office, a Mr. H., who proses it away from morning to night, and never gets beyond corporeal and material verities. He'd get these crack-brain metaphysics out of the young gentleman's head as soon as any one I know. When I can't sleep o' nights, I imagine a dialogue with Mr. H. upon any given subject, and go prosing on in fancy with him, till I either laugh or fall asleep. I have literally found it answer. I am going to stand godfather; I don't like the business; I cannot muster up decorum for these occasions; I shall certainly disgrace the font. I was at Hazlitt's marriage, and had like to have been turned out several times during the ceremony. Anything awful makes me laugh. I misbehaved once at a funeral. Yet I can read about these ceremonies with pious and proper feelings. The realities of life only seem the mockeries. I fear I must get cured along with Hartley, if not too inveterate. Don't you think Louis the Desirable is in a sort of quandary?

"After all, Bonaparte is a fine fellow, as my barber says, and I should not mind standing bareheaded at his table to do him service in his fall. They should have given him Hamp-

ton Court or Kensington, with a tether extending forty miles round London. Qu. Would not the people have ejected the Brunswicks some day in his favour? Well, we shall see.

"C. LAMB."

The following was addressed to Southey in acknowledgment of his "Roderick," the most sustained and noble of his poems.

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

"Dear Southey—I have received from Longman a copy of 'Roderick,' with the author's compliments, for which I much thank you. I don't know where I shall put all the noble presents I have lately received in that way; the 'Excursion,' Wordsworth's two last vols., and now 'Roderick,' have come pouring in upon me like some irruption from Helicon. The story of the brave Maccabee was already, you may be sure, familiar to me in all its parts. I have, since the receipt of your present, read it quite through again, and with no diminished pleasure. I don't know whether I ought to say that it has given me more pleasure than any of your long poems. 'Kehama' is doubtless more powerful, but I don't feel that firm footing in it that I do in 'Roderick;' my imagination goes sinking and floundering in the vast spaces of unopened-before systems and faiths; I am put out of the pale of my old sympathies; my moral sense is almost outraged; I can't believe, or with horror am made to believe, such desperate chances against omnipotences, such disturbances of faith to the centre; the more potent the more painful the spell. Jove, and his brotherhood of gods, tottering with the giant assailings, I can bear, for the soul's hopes are not struck at in such contests; but your oriental almighties are too much types of the intangible prototype to be meddled with without shuddering. One never connects what are called the attributes with Jupiter. I mention only what diminishes my delight at the wonder-workings of 'Kehama,' not what impeaches its power, which I confess with trembling; but 'Roderick' is a comfortable poem. It reminds me of the delight I took in the first reading of the 'Joan of Arc.' It is maturer and better than *that*, though not better to me now than that was then. It suits me better than Madoc. I am at home in Spain and Christendom. I have a timid imagination, I am afraid. I do not willingly admit of strange beliefs, or out-of-the-way creeds or places. I never read books of travels, at least not farther than Paris or Rome. I can just endure Moors, because of their connexion as foes with Christians; but Abyssinians, Ethiops, Esquimaux, Der-

rises, and all that tribe, I hate. I believe I fear them in some manner. A Mohammedan turban on the stage, though enveloping some well-known face (Mr. Cook or Mr. Maddox, whom I see another day good Christian and English waiters, inn-keepers, &c.), does not give me pleasure unalloyed. I am a Christian, Englishman, Londoner, *Templar*. God help me, when I come to put off these snug relations, and to get abroad into the world to come! I shall be like *the crow on the sand*, as Wordsworth has it; but I won't think on it; no need, I hope, yet.

"The parts I have been most pleased with, both on first and second readings, perhaps are Florinda's palliation of Roderick's crime, confessed to him in his disguise—the retreat of the Palayos family first discovered—his being made king—'For acclamation one form must serve, *more solemn for* the *breach* of *old observances*.' Roderick's vow is extremely fine, and his blessing on the vow of Alphonso:

> 'Towards the troop he spread his arms,
> As if the expanded soul diffused itself,
> And carried to all spirits *with the act*
> Its affluent inspiration.'

"It struck me forcibly that the feeling of these last lines might have been suggested to you by the Cartoon of Paul at Athens. Certain it is that a better motto or guide to that famous attitude can nowhere be found. I shall adopt it as explanatory of that violent but dignified motion. I must read again Landor's 'Julian.' I have not read it some time. I think he must have failed in Roderick, for I remember nothing of him, nor of any distinct character as a character—only fine-sounding passages. I remember thinking also he had chosen a point of time after the event, as it were, for Roderick survives to no use; but my memory is weak, and I will not wrong a fine poem by trusting to it. The notes to your poem I have not read again; but it will be a take-downable book on my shelf, and they will serve sometimes at breakfast, or times too light for the text to be duly appreciated. Though some of 'em, one of the serpent penance, is serious enough, now I think on't. Of Coleridge I hear nothing, nor of the Morgans. I hope to have him, like a reappearing star, standing up before me some time when least expected in London, as has been the case whylear.

"I am *doing* nothing (as the phrase is) but reading presents, and walk away what of the day-hours I can get from hard occupation. Pray accept once more my hearty thanks and expression of pleasure for your remembrance of me. My

sister desires her kind respects to Mrs. S. and to all at Keswick.

"Yours truly,
"C. LAMB.

"London, 6th May, 1815.

"The next present I look for is the 'White Doe.' Have you seen Mat. Bentham's 'Lay of Marie?' I think it very delicately pretty as to sentiment, &c."

The following is an extract of a letter addressed shortly afterward

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

"Since I saw you I have had a treat in the reading way which comes not every day; the Latin poems of Vincent Bourne, which were quite new to me. What a heart that man had, all laid out upon town-scenes, a proper counterpart to *some people's* extravagances. Why I mention him is, that your 'Power of Music' reminded me of his poem of the ballad-singer in the Seven Dials. Do you remember his epigram on the old woman who taught Newton the A, B, C, which, after all, he says, he hesitates not to call Newton's *Principia*?

"I was lately fatiguing myself with going over a volume of fine words by ——, excellent words; and if the heart could live by words alone, it could desire no better regale; but what an aching vacuum of matter! I don't stick at the madness of it, for that is only a consequence of shutting his eyes, and thinking he is in the age of the old Elizabeth poets. From thence I turned to V. Bourne; what a sweet, unpretending, pretty-mannered, *matter-full* creature! sucking from every flower, making a flower of everything. His diction all Latin, and his thoughts all English. Bless him! Latin wasn't good enough for him. Why wasn't he content with the language which Gay and Prior wrote in?"

The associations of Christmas increased the fervour of Lamb's wishes for Manning's return, which he now really hoped for. On Christmas-day he addressed a letter to him at Canton, and the next day another to meet him half way home, at St. Helena, &c. There seems the distance of half a globe between these letters. The first, in which Lamb pictures their dearest common friends as in a melancholy future, and makes it present—lying like dismal truths—yet with a relieving consciousness of a power to dispel the sad enchantments he has

woven, has perhaps more of what was peculiar in Lamb's cast of thought than anything of the same length which he has left us.

TO MR. MANNING.

"Dear old friend and absentee—This is Christmas-day, 1815, with us; what it may be with you I don't know, the 12th of June next year, perhaps; and if it should be the consecrated season with you, I don't see how you can keep it. You have no turkeys; you would not desecrate the festival by offering up a withered Chinese bantam instead of the savoury grand Norfolcian holocaust, that smokes all around my nostrils at this moment from a thousand firesides. Then what puddings have you? Where will you get holly to stick in your churches, or churches to stick your dried tea-leaves (that must be the substitute) in? What memorials you can have of the holy time, I see not. A chopped missionary or two may keep up the thin idea of Lent and the wilderness; but what standing evidences have you of the Nativity? 'tis our rosy-cheeked, homestalled divines, whose faces shine to the tune of Christmas; faces fragrant with the mince-pies of half a century, that alone can authenticate the cheerful mystery—I feel, I feel myself refreshed with the thought—my zeal is great against the unedified heathen. Down with the pagodas—down with the idols—Ching-chong-fo—and his foolish priesthood! Come out of Babylon, oh my friend! for her time is come, and the child that is native, and the proselyte of her gates, shall kindle and smoke together! And, in sober sense, what makes you so long from among us, Manning? You must not expect to see the same England again which you left.

"Empires have been overturned, crowns trodden into dust, the face of the western world quite changed; your friends have all got old—those you left blooming—myself (who am one of the few that remember you)—those golden hairs which you recollect my taking a pride in, turned to silvery and gray. Mary has been dead and buried many years; she desired to be buried in the silk gown you sent her. Rickman, that you remember active and strong, now walks out supported by a servant-maid and a stick. Martin Burney is a very old man. The other day an aged woman knocked at my door, and pretended to my acquaintance; it was long before I had the most distant cognition of her; but at last, together, we made her out to be Louisa, the daughter of Mrs. Topham, formerly Mrs. Morton, who had been Mrs. Reynolds, formerly Mrs. Kenny, whose first husband was Holcroft, the dramatic writer of the last century. St. Paul's church is a heap of ruins; the Mon-

ument is not half so high as you knew it, divers parts being successively taken down, which the ravages of time had rendered dangerous; the horse at Charing Cross is gone, no one knows whither; and all this has taken place while you have been settling whether Ho-hing-tong should be spelled with a—— or a——. For aught I see, you had almost as well remain where you are, and not come like a Strulbug into a world where few were born when you went away. Scarce here and there one will be able to make out your face; all your opinions will be out of date, your jokes obsolete, your puns rejected with fastidiousness as wit of the last age. Your way of mathematics has already given way to a new method, which, after all, is, I believe, the old doctrine of Maclaurin, new vamped up with what he borrowed of the negative quantity of fluxions from Euler.

"Poor Godwin! I was passing his tomb the other day in Cripplegate churchyard. There are some verses upon it written by Miss ——, which, if I thought good enough, I would send you. He was one of those who would have hailed your return, not with boisterous shouts and clamours, but with the complacent gratulations of a philosopher anxious to promote knowledge as leading to happiness—but his systems and his theories are ten feet deep in Cripplegate mould. Coleridge is just dead, having lived just long enough to close the eyes of Wordsworth, who paid the debt to nature but a week or two before—poor Col., but two days before he died, he wrote to a bookseller proposing an epic poem on the 'Wanderings of Cain,' in twenty-four books. It is said he has left behind him more than forty thousand treatises in criticism, metaphysics, and divinity, but few of them in a state of completion. They are now destined, perhaps, to wrap up spices. You see what mutations the busy hand of Time has produced, while you have consumed in foolish voluntary exile that time which might have gladdened your friends, benefited your country; but reproaches are useless. Gather up the wretched relics, my friend, as fast as you can, and come to your old home. I will rub my eyes and try to recognise you. We will shake withered hands together, and talk of old things —of St. Mary's church and the barber's opposite, where the young students in mathematics used to assemble. Poor Crips, that kept it afterward, set up a fruiterer's shop in Trumpington-street, and, for aught I know, resides there still, for I saw the name up in the last journey I took there with my sister, just before she died. I suppose you heard that I had left the India House, and gone into the Fishmonger's Almshouses over the bridge. I have a little cabin there, small and home-

ly, but you shall be welcome to it. You like oysters, and to open them yourself; I'll get you some if you come in oyster-time. Marshall, Godwin's friend, is still alive, and talks of the faces you used to make.

"Come as soon as you can.

"C. LAMB."

Here is the next day's reverse of the picture.

TO MR. MANNING.

"Dec. 26, 1815.

"Dear Manning—Following your brother's example, I have just ventured one letter to Canton, and am now hazarding another (not exactly a duplicate) to St. Helena. The first was full of unprobable romantic fictions, fitting the remoteness of the mission it goes upon; in the present I mean to confine myself nearer to truth as you come nearer home. A correspondence with the uttermost parts of the earth necessarily involves in it some heat of fancy; it sets the brain a going; but I can think on the half-way house tranquilly. Your friends, then, are not all dead or grown forgetful of you through old age, as that lying letter asserted, anticipating rather what must happen if you kept tarrying on for ever on the skirts of creation, as there seemed a danger of your doing; but they are all tolerably well and in full and perfect comprehension of what is meant by Manning's coming home again. Mrs. —— never lets her tongue run riot more than in remembrances of you. Fanny expends herself in phrases that can only be justified by her romantic nature. Mary reserves a portion of your silk, not to be buried in (as the false nuncio asserts), but to make up spick and span into a bran-new gown to wear when you come. I am the same as when you knew me, almost to a surfeiting identity. This very night I am going to *leave off tobacco!* Surely in another world this unconquerable purpose shall be realized. The soul hath not her generous aspirings implanted in her in vain. One that you knew, and, I think, the only one of those friends we knew much of in common, has died in earnest. Poor Priscilla! Her brother Robert is also dead, and several of the grown-up brothers and sisters, in the compass of a very few years. Death has not otherwise meddled much in families that I know. Not but he has his horrid eye upon us, and is whetting his infernal feathered dart every instant, as you see him truly pictured in that impressive moral picture, 'The good man at the hour of death.' I have in trust to put in the post four letters from Diss, and one from Lynn, to St. Helena, which, I hope, will accom-

pany this safe, and one from Lynn, and the one before spoken of from me, to Canton. But we all hope that these letters may be waste paper. I don't know why I have forborne writing so long. But it is such a forlorn hope to send a scrap of paper straggling over wide oceans. And yet I know, when you come home, I shall have you sitting before me at our fireside just as if you had never been away. In such an instant does the return of a person dissipate all the weight of imaginary perplexity from distance of time and space? I'll promise you good oysters. Cory is dead that kept the shop opposite St. Dunstan's, but the tougher materials of the shop survive the perishing fame of its keeper. Oysters continue to flourish under as good auspices. Poor Cory! But if you will absent yourself twenty years together, you must not expect numerically the same population to congratulate your return which wetted the seabeach with their tears when you went away. Have you recovered the breathless stone-staring astonishment into which you must have been thrown upon learning, at landing, that an Emperor of France was living in St. Helena? What an event in the solitude of the seas, like finding a fish's bone at the top of Plinlimmon; but these things are nothing in our western world. Novelties cease to affect. Come and try what your presence can.

"God bless you. Your old friend,

"C. LAMB."

The years which Lamb passed in his chambers in Inner Temple-lane were, perhaps, the happiest of his life. His salary was considerably augmented, his fame as an author was rapidly extending; he resided near the spot which he best loved, and was surrounded by a motley group of attached friends, some of them men of rarest parts, and all strongly attached to him and to his sister. Here the glory of his Wednesday nights shone forth in its greatest lustre. If you did not meet there the favourites of fortune, authors whose works bore the highest price in Paternoster Row, and who glittered in the circles of fashion, you might find those who had thought most deeply, felt most keenly, and were destined to produce the most lasting influences on the literature and manners of the age. There Hazlitt, sometimes kindling into fierce passion at any mention of the great reverses of his idol Napoleon, at other times bashfully enunciated the finest criticism on art, or dwelt with genial iteration on a passage in Chaucer; or, fresh from the theatre, expatiated on some new instance of energy in Kean, or reluctantly conceded a greatness to Kemble, or detected some popular fallacy with the

fairest and the subtlest reasoning. There Godwin, as he played his quiet rubber, or benignantly joined in the gossip of the day, sat an object of curiosity and wonder to the stranger, who had been at one time shocked or charmed with his high speculation, and at another awestruck by the force and graphic power of his novels. There Coleridge sometimes, though rarely, took his seat; and then the genial hubbub of voices was still; critics, philosophers, and poets were contented to listen; and toilworn lawyers, clerks from the India House, and members of the Stock Exchange, grew romantic while he spoke. Lamb used to say that he was inferior then to what he had been in his youth; but I can scarcely believe it; at least there is nothing in his early writing which gives any idea of the richness of his mind so lavishly poured out at this time in his happiest moods. Although he looked much older than he was, his hair being silvered all over, and his person tending to corpulency, there was about him no trace of bodily sickness or mental decay, but rather an air of voluptuous repose. His benignity of manner placed his auditors entirely at their ease, and inclined them to listen delighted to the sweet, low tone in which he began to discourse on some high theme. Whether he had won for his greedy listener only some raw lad, or charmed a circle of beauty, rank, and wit, who hung breathless on his words, he talked with equal eloquence; for his subject, not his audience, inspired him. At first his tones were conversational; he seemed to dally with the shallows of the subject and with fantastic images which bordered it; but gradually the thought grew deeper, and the voice deepened with the thought; the stream, gathering strength, seemed to bear along with it all things which opposed its progress, and blended them with its current; and, stretching away among regions tinted with ethereal colours, was lost at airy distance in the horizon of fancy. His hearers were unable to grasp his theories, which were, indeed, too vast to be exhibited in the longest conversation; but they perceived noble images, generous suggestions, affecting pictures of virtue, which enriched their minds and nurtured their best affections. Coleridge was sometimes induced to recite portions of "Christabel," then enshrined in manuscript from eyes profane, and gave a bewitching effect to its wizard lines. But more peculiar in its beauty than this was his recitation of Kubla Khan. As he repeated the passage—

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mont Abora!

his voice seemed to mount and melt into air as the images grew more visionary, and the suggested associations more remote. He usually met opposition by conceding the point to the objector, and then went on with his high argument as if it had never been raised: thus satisfying his antagonist, himself, and all who heard him; none of whom desired to hear his discourse frittered into points, or displaced by the near encounter even of the most brilliant wits. The first time I met him, which was on one of those Wednesday evenings, we left the party together between one and two in the morning; Coleridge took my arm, and led me, nothing loath, at a very gentle pace, to his lodgings, at the Gloucester Coffee-house, pouring into my ear the whole way an argument by which he sought to reconcile the doctrines of Necessity and Free-will, winding on through a golden maze of exquisite illustration; but finding no end, except with the termination of that (to me) enchanted walk. He was only then on the threshold of the Temple of Truth, into which his genius darted its quivering and uncertain rays, but which he promised shortly to light up with unbroken lustre. "I understood a beauty in the words, but not the words:"

> "And when the stream of sound,
> Which overflow'd the soul, had pass'd away,
> A consciousness survived that it had left,
> Deposited upon the silent shore
> Of memory, images and gentle thoughts,
> Which cannot die, and will not be destroy'd."

Men of "great mark and likelihood" attended those delightful suppers, where the utmost freedom prevailed—including politicians of every grade, from Godwin up to the editor of the "New Times."

Hazlitt has alluded *con amore* to these meetings in his Essay "On the Conversation of Authors," and has reported one of the most remarkable discussions which graced them in his Essay "On Persons one would wish to have seen," published by his son, in the two volumes of his remains, which with so affectionate a care he has given to the world. In this was a fine touch of Lamb's pious feeling, breaking through his fancies and his humours, which Hazlitt has recorded, but which cannot be duly appreciated except by those who can recall to memory the suffused eye and quivering lip with which he stammered out a reference to the name which he would not utter. "There is only one other person I can ever think of after this," said he. "If Shakspeare was to come into the room, we should all rise to meet him; but if *That Person* were to come into it, we should all fall down and kiss the hem of his garment."

Among the frequent guests in Inner Temple-lane was Mr. Ayrton, the director of the music at the Italian Opera. To him Lamb addressed the following rhymed epistle on 17th May, 1817.

TO WILLIAM AYRTON, ESQ.

My dear friend,
Before I end,
Have you any
More orders for Don Giovanni,
To give
Him that doth live
Your faithful Zany?

Without raillery,
I mean Gallery
Ones:
For I am a person that shuns
All ostentation,
And being at the top of the fashion;
And seldom go to operas,
But *in formâ pauperis!*

I go to the play
In a very economical sort of a way,
Rather to see
Than be seen;
Though I'm no ill sight
Neither,
By candlelight.
And in some kinds of weather.
You might pit me
For height
Against Kean;
But in a grand tragic scene
I'm nothing:
It would create a kind of loathing
To see me act Hamlet;
There'd be many a damn let
Fly
At my presumption,
If I should try,
Being a fellow of no gumption.

By-the-way, tell me candidly how you relish
This, which they call
The lapidary style?
Opinions vary.
The late Mr. Mellish
Could never abide it;
He thought it vile,
And coxcombical.
My friend the poet-laureate,
Who is a great lawyer at
Anything comical,
Was the first who tried it;
But Mellish could never abide it;
But it signifies very little what Mellish said,
Because he is dead.

For who can confute
A body that's mute?

Or who would fight
With a senseless sprite?
Or think of troubling
An impenetrable old goblin,
That's dead and gone,
And stiff as stone,
To convince him with arguments pro and con?
As if some live logician,
Bred up at Merton,
Or Mr. Hazlitt, the metaphysician—
Hey, Mr. Ayrton!
With all your rare tone.*

For tell me how should an apparition
List to your call,
Though you talk'd for ever
Ever so clever:
When his ear itself,
By which he must hear, or not hear at all,
Is laid on the shelf?
Or put the case
(For more grace),
It were a female spectre—
How could you expect her
To take much gust
In long speeches,
With her tongue as dry as dust,
In a sandy place,
Where no peaches,
Nor lemons, nor limes, nor oranges hang,
To drop on the drought of an arid harangue,
Or quench,
With their sweet drench,
The fiery pangs which the worms inflict,
With their endless nibblings,
Like quibblings,
Which the corpse may dislike, but can ne'er contradict—
Hey, Mr. Ayrton?
With all your rare tone.

I am,
C. LAMB.

One of Lamb's most intimate friends and warmest admirers, Barron Field, disappeared from the circle on being appointed to a judicial situation in New South Wales. In the following letter to him Lamb renewed the feeling with which he had addressed Manning at the distance of a hemisphere.

TO MR. FIELD.

"My dear Barron—The bearer of this letter so far across the seas is Mr. Lawrey, who comes out to you as a missionary, and whom I have been strongly importuned to recommend to you as a most worthy creature by Mr. Fenwick, a very old, honest friend of mine; of whom, if my memory does not de-

* From this it may at first appear that the author meant to ascribe vocal talents to his friend, the director of the Italian Opera; but it is merely a "line for rhyme." For, though the public were indebted to Mr. A. for many fine foreign singers, we believe that he never claimed to be himself a singer.

ceive me, you have had some knowledge heretofore as editor of 'The Statesman,' a man of talent, and patriotic. If you can show him any facilities in his arduous undertaking, you will oblige us much. Well, and how does the land of thieves use you? and how do you pass your time in your extra-judicial intervals? Going about the streets with a lantern, like Diogenes, looking for an honest man? You may look long enough, I fancy. Do give me some notion of the manners of the inhabitants where you are. They don't thieve all day long, do they? No human property could stand such continuous battery. And what do they do when they ain't stealing?

"Have you got a theatre? What pieces are performed? Shakspeare's, I suppose; not so much for the poetry as for his having once been in danger of leaving his country on account of certain 'small deer.'

"Have you poets among you? Cursed plagiarists, I fancy, if you have any. I would not trust an idea or a pocket-handkerchief of mine among 'em. You are almost competent to answer Lord Bacon's problem, whether a nation of atheists can subsist together. You are practically in one:

> 'So thievish 'tis, that the Eighth Commandment itself
> Scarce seemeth there to be.'

Our old honest world goes on with little perceptible variation. Of course you have heard of poor ——'s death, and that G. D. is one of Lord Stanhope's residuaries. I am afraid he has not touched much of the residue yet. B—— is going to Demerara or Essequibo, I am not quite certain which. A—— is turned actor. He came out in genteel comedy at Cheltenham this season, and has hopes of a London engagement.

"For my own history, I am just in the same spot, doing the same thing (videlicet, little or nothing) as when you left me; only I have positive hopes that I shall be able to conquer that inveterate habit of smoking which you may remember I indulged in. I think of making a beginning this evening, viz., Sunday, 31st Aug., 1817, not Wednesday, the 2d Feb., 1818, as it will be, perhaps, when you read this for the first time. There is the difficulty of writing from one end of the globe (hemispheres I call 'em) to another. Why, half the truths I have sent you in this letter will become lies before they reach you, and some of the lies (which I have mixed for variety's sake, and to exercise your judgment in the finding of them out) may be turned into sad realities before you shall be called upon to detect them. Such are the defects of going by different chronologies. Your now is not my now; and, again, your then is not my then; but my now may be your then, and vice versâ. Whose head is competent to these things?

"How does Mrs. Field get on in her geography? Does she know where she is by this time? I am not sure sometimes you are not in another planet: but then I don't like to ask Capt. Burney, or any of those that know anything about it, for fear of exposing my ignorance.

"Our kindest remembrances, however, to Mrs. F., if she will accept of reminiscences from another planet, or at least another hemisphere."

Lamb's intention of spending the rest of his days in the Middle Temple was not to be realized. The inconveniences of being in chambers began to be felt as he and his sister grew older, and in the autumn of this year they removed to lodgings in Russell-street, Covent Garden, the corner house, delightfully situated between the two great theatres. In November, 1817, Miss Lamb announced the removal to Miss Wordsworth in a letter, to which Lamb added the following:

TO MISS WORDSWORTH.

"Dear Miss Wordsworth—Here we are transplanted from our native soil. I thought we never could have been torn up from the Temple. Indeed, it was an ugly wrench, but like a tooth, now 'tis out, and I am easy. We never can strike root so deep in any other ground. This where we are is a light bit of gardener's mould, and if they take us up from it it will cost no blood and groans, like mandrakes pulled up. We are in the individual spot I like best in all this great city. The theatres, with all their noises. Covent Garden, dearer to me than any gardens of Alcinous, where we are morally sure of the earliest peas and 'sparagus. Bow-street, where the thieves are examined, within a few yards of us. Mary had not been here four-and-twenty hours before she saw a thief. She sits at the window working; and casually throwing out her eyes, she sees a concourse of people coming this way, with a constable to conduct the solemnity. These incidents agreeably diversify a female life.

* * * * * *

"Mary has brought her part of this letter to an orthodox and loving conclusion, which is very well, for I have no room for pansies and remembrances. What a nice holyday I got on Wednesday by favour of a princess dying!

"C. L."

CHAPTER XI.

[1818 to 1820.]

Letters to Mrs. Wordsworth, Southey, Manning, and Coleridge.

LAMB, now in the immediate neighbourhood of the theatres, renewed the dramatic associations of his youth, which the failure of one experiment had not chilled. Although he rather loved to dwell on the recollections of the actors who had passed from the stage than to mingle with the happy crowds who hailed the successive triumphs of Mr. Kean, he formed some new and steady theatrical attachments. His chief favourites of this time were Miss Kelly, Miss Burrell of the Olympic, and Munden. The first, then the sole support of the English Opera, became a frequent guest in Great Russel-street, and charmed the circle there by the heartiness of her manners, the delicacy and gentleness of her remarks, and her unaffected sensibility, as much as she had done on the stage. Miss Burrell, a lady of more limited powers, but with a frank and noble style, was discovered by Lamb on one of the visits which he paid, on the invitation of his old friend Elliston, to the Olympic, where the lady performed the hero of that happy parody of Moncrieff's, Giovanni in London. To her Lamb devoted a little article, which he sent to the Examiner, in which he thus addresses her: "But Giovanni, free, fine, frank-spirited, single-hearted creature, turning all the mischief into fun as harmless as toys, or children's *make believe*, what praise can we repay to you adequate to the pleasure which you have given us? We had better be silent, for you have no name, and our mention will but be thought fantastical. You have taken out the sting from the evil thing, by what magic we know not, for there are actresses of greater merit and likelihood than you. With you and your Giovanni our spirits will hold communion, whenever sorrow or suffering shall be our lot. We have seen you triumph over the infernal powers; and pain and Erebus, and the powers of darkness, are shapes of a dream." Miss Burrell soon married a person named Gold, and disappeared from the stage. To Munden in prose, and Miss Kelly in verse, Lamb has done ample justice.

Lamb's increasing celebrity and universal kindness rapidly

increased the number of his visiters. He thus complained, in wayward mood, of them to Mrs. Wordsworth :—

TO MRS. WORDSWORTH.

"East India House, 18th Feb., 1818.

"My dear Mrs. Wordsworth—I have repeatedly taken pen in hand to answer your kind letter. My sister should more properly have done it, but she having failed, I consider myself answerable for her debts. I am now trying to do it in the midst of commercial noises, and with a quill which seems more ready to glide into arithmetical figures and names of gourds, cassia, cardemoms, aloes, ginger, or tea, than into kindly responses and friendly recollections. The reason why I cannot write letters at home is, that I am never alone. Plato's—(I write to W. W. now)—Plato's double-animal parted never longed more to be reciprocally reunited in the system of its first creation, than I sometimes do to be but for a moment single and separate. Except my morning's walk to the office, which is like treading on sands of gold for that reason, I am never so. I cannot walk home from office but some officious friend offers his unwelcome courtesies to accompany me. All the morning I am pestered. I could sit and gravely cast up sums in great books, or compare sum with sum, and write 'paid' against this, and 'unpaid' against t'other, and yet reserve in some corner of my mind 'some darling thoughts all my own'—faint memory of some passage in a book, or the tone of an absent friend's voice—a snatch of Miss Burrell's singing, or a gleam of Fanny Kelly's divine plain face. The two operations might be going on at the same time without thwarting, as the sun's two motions (earth's, I mean), or, as I sometimes turn round till I am giddy in my back parlour, while my sister is walking longitudinally in the front; or, as the shoulder of veal twists round with the spit, while the smoke wreathes up the chimney. But there are a set of amateurs of the Belles Lettres—the gay science—who come to me as a sort of rendezvous, putting questions of criticism, of British Institutions, Lalla Rookhs, &c.—what Coleridge said at the lecture last night—who have the form of reading men, but, for any possible use reading can be to them but to talk of, might as well have been Ante-Cadmeans born, or have lain sucking out the sense of an Egyptian hieroglyph as long as the pyramids will last before they should find it. These pests worrit me at business and in all its intervals, perplexing my accounts, poisoning my little salutary warming-time at the fire, puzzling my paragraphs if I take a newspaper, cramming in between my own free thoughts and a column of

figures which had come to an amicable compromise but for them. Their noise ended, one of them, as I said, accompanies me home, lest I should be solitary for a moment; he at length takes his welcome leave at the door; up I go, mutton on table, hungry as hunter, hope to forget my cares, and bury them in the agreeable abstraction of mastication; knock at the door, in comes Mrs. ——, or M——, or Demi-gorgon, or my brother, or somebody, to prevent my eating alone—a process absolutely necessary to my poor wretched digestion.. Oh, the pleasure of eating alone! eating my dinner alone! let me think of it. But in they come, and make it absolutely necessary that I should open a bottle of orange—for my meat turns into stone when any one dines with me if I have not wine. Wine can mollify stones; then *that* wine turns into acidity, acerbity, misanthropy, a hatred of my interrupters (God bless 'em! I love some of 'em dearly), and, with the hatred, a still greater aversion to their going away. Bad is the dead sea they bring upon me, choking and deadening, but worse is the deader dry sand they leave me on if they go before bedtime. Come never, I would say to these spoilers of my dinner; but, if you come, never go! The fact is, this interruption does not happen very often, but every time it comes by surprise, that present bane of my life, orange wine, with all its dreary stifling consequences, follows. Evening company I should always like had I any mornings, but I am saturated with human faces (*divine* forsooth!) and voices all the golden morning; and five evenings in a week would be as much as I should covet to be in company, but I assure you that is a wonderful week in which I can get two, or one to myself. I am never C. L., but always C. L. & Co. He who thought it not good for man to be alone, preserve me from the more prodigious monstrosity of being never by myself. I forget bedtime, but even there these sociable frogs clamber up to annoy me. Once a week, generally some singular evening that! being alone, I go to bed at the hour I ought always to be abed; just close to my bedroom window is the clubroom of a public house, where a set of singers, I take them to be chorus singers of the two theatres (it must be *both of them*), begin their orgies. They are a set of fellows (as I conceive) who, being limited by their talents to the burden of the song at the playhouses, in revenge, have got the common popular airs by Bishop, or some cheap composer, arranged for choruses, that is, to be sung all in chorus. At least, I never can catch any of the text of the plain song, nothing but the Babylonish choral howl at the tail on't. 'That fury being quench'd'—the howl, I mean—a burden succeeds of shouts and clapping

and knocking of the table. At length overtasked nature drops under it, and escapes for a few hours into the society of the sweet silent creatures of dreams, which go away with mocks and mows at cockcrow. And then I think of the words Christabel's father used (bless me, I have dipped in the wrong ink) to say every morning by way of variety when he awoke:

'Every knell the Baron saith,
Wakes us up to a world of death'—

or something like it. All I mean by this senseless interrupted tale is, that, by my central situation, I am a little over-companied. Not that I have any animosity against the good creatures that are so anxious to drive away the happy solitude from me. I like 'em, and cards, and a cheerful glass, but I mean merely to give you an idea between office confinement and after-office society, how little time I can call my own. I mean only to draw a picture, not to make an inference. I would not, that I know of, have it otherwise. I only wish sometimes I could exchange some of my faces and voices for the faces and voices which a late visitation brought most welcome, and carried away, leaving regret but more pleasure, even a kind of gratitude, at being so often favoured with that kind northern visitation. My London faces and noises don't hear me—I mean no disrespect, or I should explain myself, that, instead of their return two hundred and twenty times a year, and the return of W. W., &c., seven times in one hundred and four weeks, some more equal distribution might be found. I have scarce room to put in Mary's kind love, and my poor name,

"C. LAMB.

"—— goes on lecturing. I mean to hear some of the course, but lectures are not much to my taste, whatever the lecturer may be. If *read*, they are dismal flat, and you can't think why you are brought together to hear a man read his works, which you could read so much better at leisure yourself; if delivered extempore, I am always in pain, lest the gift of utterance should suddenly fail the orator in the middle, as it did me at the dinner given in honour of me at the London Tavern. 'Gentlemen,' said I, and there I stopped; the rest my feelings were under the necessity of supplying. Mrs. Wordsworth *will* go on, kindly haunting us with visions of seeing the lakes once more, which never can be realized. Between us there is a great gulf, not of inexplicable moral antipathies and distances, I hope, as there seemed to be between me and that gentleman concerned in the stamp-office, that I so strangely recoiled from at Haydon's. I think I had

an instinct that he was the head of an office. I hate all such people—accountants' deputy accountants. The dear abstract notion of the East India Company, as long as she is unseen, is pretty, rather poetical; but, as she makes herself manifest by the persons of such beasts, I loathe and detest her as the scarlet what-do-you-call-her of Babylon. I thought, after abridging us of all our red-letter days, they had done their worst, but I was deceived in the length to which heads of offices, those true liberty-haters, can go. They are the tyrants, not Ferdinand, nor Nero; by a decree passed this week, they have abridged us of the immemorially-observed custom of going at one o'clock of a Saturday, the little shadow of a holyday left us. Dear W. W., be thankful for liberty."

Among Lamb's new acquaintances was Mr. Charles Ollier, a young bookseller of considerable literary talent, which he has since exhibited in the original and beautiful tale of "Inesilla," who proposed to him the publication of his scattered writings in a collected form. Lamb acceded; and nearly all he had then written in prose and verse were published this year by Mr. Ollier and his brother, in two small and elegant volumes. Early copies were despatched to Southey and Wordsworth; the acknowledgments of the former of whom produced a reply, from which the following is an extract:—

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

"Monday, Oct. 26, 1818.

"Dear Southey—I am pleased with your friendly remembrances of my little things. I do not know whether I have done a silly thing or a wise one, but it is of no great consequence. I run no risk, and care for no censures. My bread and cheese is stable as the foundations of Leadenhall-street, and, if it hold out as long as the 'foundations of our empire in the East,' I shall do pretty well. You and W. W. should have had your presentation copies more ceremoniously sent, but I had no copies when I was leaving town for my holydays, and, rather than delay, commissioned my bookseller to send them thus nakedly. By not hearing from W. W. or you, I began to be afraid Murray had not sent them. I do not see S. T. C. so often as I could wish. I am *better than I deserve* to be. The hot weather has been such a treat! Mary joins in this little corner in kindest remembrance to you all.

"C. L."

Lamb's interest was strongly excited for Mr. Kenney on the production of his comedy, entitled "*A Word to the La-*

dies." Lamb had engaged to contribute the prologue; but the promise pressed hard upon him, and he procured the requisite quantity of verse from a very inferior hand. Kenney, who had married Holcroft's widow, had more than succeeded to him in Lamb's regards. Holcroft had considerable dramatic skill; great force and earnestness of style, and noble sincerity and uprightness of disposition; but he was an austere observer of morals and manners, and even his grotesque characters were hardly and painfully sculptured; while Kenney, with as fine a perception of the ludicrous and the peculiar, was more airy, more indulgent, more graceful, and exhibited more frequent glimpses of "the gayest, happiest attitude of things." The comedy met with less success than the reputation of the author and brilliant experience of the past had rendered probable, and Lamb had to perform the office of comforter, as he had done on the more unlucky event to Godwin. To this play Lamb refers in the following note to Coleridge, who was contemplating a course of lectures on Shakspeare, and who sent Lamb a ticket with sad forebodings that the course would be his last.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"My dear Coleridge—I have been in a state of incessant hurry ever since the receipt of your ticket. It found me incapable of attending you, it being the night of Kenney's new comedy. You know my local aptitudes at such a time; I have been a thorough rendezvous for all consultations; my head begins to clear up a little, but it has had bells in it. Thank you kindly for your ticket, though the mournful prognostic which accompanies it certainly renders its permanent pretensions less marketable; but I trust to hear many a course yet. You excepted Christmas week, by which I understood *next week;* I thought Christmas week was that which Christmas Sunday ushered in. We are sorry it never lies in your way to come to us; but, dear Mohammed, we will come to you. Will it be convenient to all the good people at Highgate if we take a stage up, *not next Sunday*, but the following, viz., 3d January, 1819—shall we be too late to catch a skirt of the old outgoer? how the years crumble from under us! We shall hope to see you before then; but, if not, let us know *if then* will be convenient. Can we secure a coach home?

"Believe me ever yours,

"C. LAMB.

"I have but one holyday, which is Christmas day itself nakedly, no pretty garnish and fringes of St. John's day, Holy Innocents', &c., that used to bestud it all around in the cal-

endar. *Improbe labor!* I write six hours every day in this candlelight fog-den at Leadenhall."

In the next year [1819] Lamb was greatly pleased by the dedication to him of Wordsworth's poem of "The Wagoner," which Wordsworth had read to him in MS. thirteen years before. On receipt of the little volume Lamb acknowledged it as follows.

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

"My dear Wordsworth—You cannot imagine how proud we are here of the dedication. We read it twice for once that we do the poem. I mean all through; yet 'Benjamin' is no common favourite; there is a spirit of beautiful tolerance in it; it is as good as it was in 1806; and will be as good in 1829, if our dim eyes shall be awake to peruse it. Methinks there is a kind of shadowing affinity between the subject of the narrative and the subject of the dedication; but I will not enter into personal themes, else, substituting ******* **** for Ben, and the Honourable United Company of Merchants, trading to the East Indies, for the master of the misused team, it might seem, by no far-fetched analogy, to point its dim warnings hitherward; but I reject the omen, especially as its import seems to have been diverted to another victim.

"I will never write another letter with alternate inks. You cannot imagine how it cramps the flow of the style. I can conceive Pindar (I do not mean to compare myself to *him*), by the command of Hiero, the Sicilian tyrant (was not he the tyrant of some place? fy on my neglect of history)—I can conceive him, by command of Hiero or Perillus, set down to pen an Isthmian or Nemean panegyric in lines, alternate red and black. I maintain he couldn't have done it; it would have been a strait-laced torture to his muse; he would have called for the bull for a relief. Neither could Lycidas nor the Chronics (how do you like the word?) of Samson Agonistes have been written with two inks. Your couplets with points, epilogues to Mr. H.'s, &c., might be even benefited by the twy-fount, where one line (the second) is for point, and the first for rhyme. I think the alternation would assist, like a mould. I maintain it, you could not have written your stanzas on pre-existence with two inks. Try another; and Rogers, with his silver standish, having one ink only, I will bet my 'Ode on Tobacco' against the 'Pleasures of Memory'—and 'Hope,' too, shall put more fervour of enthusiasm into the same subject than you can with your two; he shall do it *stans pede in uno*, as it were.

"The 'Wagoner' is very ill put up in boards, at least it seems to me always to open at the dedication; but that is a mechanical fault. I reread the 'White Doe of Rylstone;' the title should be always written at length, as Mary Sabilla N——, a very nice woman of our acquaintance, always signs hers at the bottom of the shortest note. Mary told her, if her name had been Mary Ann, she would have signed M. A. N——, or M. only, dropping the A., which makes me think, with some other trifles, that she understands something of human nature. My pen goes galloping on most rhapsodically, glad to have escaped the bondage of two inks.

"Manning had just sent it home, and it came as fresh to me as the immortal creature it speaks of. M. sent it home with a note, having this passage in it: 'I cannot help writing to you while I am reading Wordsworth's poem. I have got into the third canto, and say that it raises my opinion of him very much indeed.* 'Tis broad, noble, poetical, with a masterly scanning of human actions, absolutely above common readers. What a manly (implied) interpretation of (bad) party-actions, as trampling the Bible, &c.,' and so he goes on.

"I do not know which I like best, the prologue (the latter part especially) to P. Bell, or the epilogue to Benjamin. Yes, I tell stories; I do know I like the last best; and the 'Wagoner' altogether is a pleasanter remembrance to me than the 'Itinerant.' If it were not, the page before the first page would and ought to make it so.

"If, as you say, the 'Wagoner,' in some sort, came at my call, oh for a potent voice to call forth the 'Recluse' from his profound dormitory, where he sleeps forgetful of his foolish charge—the world.

"Had I three inks, I would invoke him! Talfourd has written a most kind review of J. Woodvil, &c., in the 'Champion.' He is your most zealous admirer, in solitude and in crowds. H. Crabbe Robinson gives me any dear prints that I happen to admire, and I love him for it and for other things. Alsager shall have his copy, but at present I have lent it *for a day only*, not choosing to part with my own. Mary's love. How do you all do, amanuenses both—marital and sororal?

"C. LAMB."

The next letter which remains is addressed to Manning (returned to England, and domiciled in Hertfordshire), in the spring of 1819.

* "N.B.—M., from his peregrinations, is twelve or fourteen years *behind* in his knowledge of who has or has not written good verse of late."

TO MR. MANNING.

"My dear M.—I want to know how your brother is, if you have heard lately. I want to know about you. I wish you were nearer. How are my cousins, the Gladmans, of Wheathamstead, and farmer Bruton? Mrs. Bruton is a glorious woman.

"Hail, Mackery End."

This is a fragment of a blank verse poem which I once meditated, but got no further.* The E. I. H. has been thrown into a quandary by the strange phenomenon of poor —— ——, whom I have known man and madman twenty-seven years, he being elder here than myself by nine years and more. He was always a pleasant, gossiping, half-headed, muzzy, dozing, dreaming, walk-about, inoffensive chap; a little too fond of the creature; who isn't at times? but —— had not brains to work off an overnight's surfeit by ten o'clock next morning, and, unfortunately, in he wandered the other morning drunk with last night, and with a superfetation of drink taken in since he set out from bed. He came staggering under his double burden, like trees in Java, bearing at once blossom, fruit, and falling fruit, as I have heard you or some other traveller tell, with his face literally as blue as the bluest firmament; some wretched calico that he had mopped his poor oozy front with had rendered up its native die, and the devil a bit would he consent to wash it, but swore it was characteristic, for he was going to the sale of indigo, and set up a laugh which I did not think the lungs of mortal man were competent to. It was like a thousand people laughing, or the Goblin Page. He imagined afterward that the whole office had been laughing at him, so strange did his own sounds strike upon his *non*sensorium. But —— has laughed his last laugh, and awoke the next day to find himself reduced from an abused income of 600*l.* per annum to one sixth of the sum, after thirty-six years' tolerably good service. The quality of mercy was not strained in his behalf; the gentle dews dropped not on him from heaven. It just came across me that I was writing to Canton. Will you drop in tomorrow night? Fanny Kelly is coming, if she does not cheat us. Mrs. *Gold* is well, but proves 'uncoin'd,' as the lovers about Wheathamstead would say.

"I have not had such a quiet half hour to sit down to a quiet letter for many years. I have not been interrupted

* See "Mackery End, in Hertfordshire," vol. ii., p. 91, for a charming account of a visit to their cousin in the country with Mr. Barron Field.

above four times. I wrote a letter the other day in alternate lines, black ink and red, and you cannot think how it chilled the flow of ideas. Next Monday is Whit-Monday. What a reflection! Twelve years ago, and I should have kept that and the following holyday in the fields a Maying. All of those pretty pastoral delights are over. This dead, everlasting dead desk—how it weighs the spirit of a gentleman down! This dead wood of the desk, instead of your living trees! But then, again, I hate the Joskins, *a name for Hertfordshire bumpkins*. Each state of life has its inconvenience; but then, again, mine has more than one. Not that I repine, or grudge, or murmur at my destiny. I have meat and drink, and decent apparel; I shall, at least, when I get a new hat.

"A redhaired man just interrupted me. He has broke the current of my thoughts. I haven't a word to add. I don't know why I send this letter, but I have had a hankering to hear about you some days. Perhaps it will go off before your reply comes. If it don't, I assure you no letter was ever welcomer from you, from Paris or Macao.

"C. LAMB."

The following letter, dated 25th November, 1819, is addressed to Miss Wordsworth, on Wordsworth's youngest son visiting Lamb in London.

TO MISS WORDSWORTH.

"Dear Miss Wordsworth—You will think me negligent; but I wanted to see more of William before I ventured to express a prediction. Till yesterday I had barely seen him—*Virgilium tantum vidi*—but yesterday he gave us his small company to a bullock's heart, and I can pronounce him a lad of promise. He is no pedant nor bookworm; so far I can answer. Perhaps he has, hitherto, paid too little attention to other men's inventions, preferring, like Lord Foppington, the 'natural sprouts of his own.' But he has observation, and seems thoroughly awake. I am ill at remembering other people's *bons mots*, but the following are a few:—Being taken over Waterloo Bridge, he remarked, that if we had no mountains, we had a fine river at least; which was a touch of the comparative: but then he added, in a strain which augured less for his future abilities as a political economist, that he supposed they must take at least a pound a week toll. Like a curious naturalist, he inquired if the tide did not come up a little salty. This being satisfactorily answered, he put another question, as to the flux and reflux; which, being rather cunningly evaded than artfully solved by that she-Aristotle,

Mary, who muttered something about its getting up an hour sooner and sooner every day, he sagely replied, 'Then it must come to the same thing at last;' which was a speech worthy of an infant Halley! The lion in the 'Change by no means came up to his ideal standard; so impossible is it for Nature, in any of her works, to come up to the standard of a child's imagination! The whelps (lionets) he was sorry to find were dead; and, on particular inquiry, his old friend the ourang-outang had gone the way of all flesh also. The grand tiger was also sick, and expected in no short time to exchange this transitory world for another, or none. But, again, there was a golden eagle (I do not mean that of Charing) which did much arride and console him. William's genius, I take it, leans a little to the figurative; for, being at play at tricktrack (a kind of minor billiard-table which we keep for smaller wights, and sometimes refresh our own mature fatigues with taking a hand at), not being able to hit a ball he had iterate aimed at, he cried out, 'I cannot hit that beast.' Now the balls are usually called men, but he felicitously hit upon a middle term; a term of approximation and imaginative reconciliation; a something where the two ends of the brute matter (ivory), and their human and rather violent personification into men, might meet, as I take it, illustrative of that excellent remark, in a certain preface about imagination, explaining 'Like a seabeast that had crawled forth to sun himself.' Not that I accuse William Minor of hereditary plagiary, or conceive the image to have come from the paternal store. Rather he seemeth to keep aloof from any source of imitation, and purposely to remain ignorant of what mighty poets have done in this kind before him; for, being asked if his father had ever been on Westminster Bridge, he answered that he did not know!

"It is hard to discern the oak in the acorn, or a temple like St. Paul's in the first stone which is laid; nor can I quite prefigure what destination the genius of William Minor hath to take. Some few hints I have set down to guide my future observations. He hath the power of calculation in no ordinary degree for a chit. He combineth figures, after the first boggle, rapidly; as in the tricktrack board, where the hits are figured, at first he did perceive that 15 and 7 made 22, but by a little use he could combine 8 with 25, and 33 again with 16, which approacheth something in kind (far let me be from flattering him by saying in degree) to that of the famous American boy. I am sometimes inclined to think I perceive the future satirist in him, for he hath a sub-sardonic smile which bursteth out upon occasion; as when he was asked if

London were as big as Ambleside; and, indeed, no other answer was given or proper to be given to so ensnaring and provoking a question. In the contour of scull, certainly, I discern something paternal. But whether in all respects the future man shall transcend his father's fame, Time, the trier of Geniuses, must decide. Be it pronounced peremptorily at present that William is a well-mannered child, and, though no great student, hath yet a lively eye for things that lie before him.

"Given in haste from my desk at Leadenhall.

"Yours, and yours most sincerely,

"C. LAMB."

CHAPTER XII.

[1820 to 1823.]

Letters to Wordsworth, Coleridge, Field, Wilson, and Barton.

THE widening circle of Lamb's literary friends now embraced additional authors and actors—famous, or just bursting into fame. He welcomed in the author of the "Dramatic Scenes," who chose to appear in print as Barry Cornwall, a spirit most congenial with his own in its serious moods—one whose genius he had assisted to impel towards its kindred models, the great dramatists of Elizabeth's time, and in whose success he received the first and best reward of the efforts he had made to inspire a taste for these old masters of humanity. Mr. Macready, who had just emancipated himself from the drudgery of representing the villains of tragedy, by his splendid performance of *Richard*, was introduced to him by his old friend Charles Lloyd, who had visited London for change of scene, under great depression of spirits. Lloyd owed a debt of gratitude to Macready, which exemplified the true uses of the acted drama with a force which it would take many sermons of its stoutest opponents to reason away. A deep gloom had gradually overcast his mind, and threatened wholly to encircle it, when he was induced to look in at Covent Garden Theatre, and see the performance of *Rob Roy*. The picture which he then beheld of the generous outlaw—the frank, gallant, noble bearing—the air and movements, as of one "free of mountain solitudes"—the touches of manly pathos and irresistible cordiality, delighted and melted him, won him from his painful introspections, and brought to him

the unwonted relief of tears. He went home "a *gayer* and a wiser man;" returned again to the theatre whenever the healing enjoyments could be renewed there; and sought the acquaintance of the actor who had broken the melancholy spell in which he was enthralled, and had restored the pulses of his nature to their healthful beatings. The year 1820 gave Lamb an interest in Macready beyond that which he had derived from the introduction of Lloyd, arising from the power with which he animated the first production of one of his oldest friends—"Virginius." Knowles had been a friend and disciple of Hazlitt from a boy; and Lamb had liked and esteemed him as a hearty companion; but he had not guessed at the extraordinary dramatic power which lay ready for kindling in his brain, and still less at the delicacy of tact with which he had unveiled the sources of the most profound affections. Lamb had almost lost his taste for acted tragedy, as the sad realities of life had pressed more nearly on him; yet he made an exception in favour of the first and happiest part of "Virginius," those paternal scenes which stand alone in the modern drama, and which Macready informed with the fulness of a father's affection.

The establishment of the "London Magazine," under the auspices of Mr. John Scott, occasioned Lamb's introduction to the public by the name, under colour of which he acquired his most brilliant reputation—"Elia." The adoption of this signature was purely accidental. His first contribution to the magazine was a description of the Old South Sea House, where Lamb had passed a few months' novitiate as a clerk thirty years before, and of its inmates who had long passed away; and remembering the name of a gay, light-hearted foreigner, who fluttered there at that time, he subscribed his name to the essay. It was afterward affixed to subsequent contributions; and Lamb used it until, in his "Last Essays of Elia," he bade it a sad farewell.

The perpetual influx of visiters whom he could not repel, whom, indeed, he was always glad to welcome, but whose visits unstrung him, induced him to take lodgings at Dalston, to which he occasionally retired when he wished for repose. The deaths of some who were dear to him cast a melancholy tinge on his mind, as may be seen in the following:—

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

"20th March, 1822.

"My dear Wordsworth—A letter from you is very grateful; I have not seen a Kendal postmark so long! We are pretty well, save colds and rheumatics, and a certain deadness to every-

thing, which, I think, I may date from poor John's loss, and another accident or two at the same time, that has made me almost bury myself at Dalston, where yet I see more faces than I could wish. Deaths overset one, and put one out long after the recent grief. Two or three have died within this last two twelvemonths, and so many parts of me have been numbed. One sees a picture, reads an anecdote, starts a casual fancy, and thinks to tell of it to this person in preference to every other: the person is gone whom it would have peculiarly suited. It won't do for another. Every departure destroys a class of sympathies. There's Captain Burney gone! What fun has whist now? what matters it what you lead, if you can no longer fancy him looking over you? One never hears anything, but the image of the particular person occurs with whom alone almost you would care to share the intelligence—thus one distributes one's self about—and now for so many parts of me I have lost the market. Common natures do not suffice me. Good people, as they are called, won't serve. I want individuals. I am made up of queer points, and I want so many answering needles. The going away of friends does not make the remainder more precious. It takes so much from them as there was a common link. A. B. and C. make a party. A. dies. B. not only loses A., but all A.'s part in C. C. loses A.'s part in B., and so the alphabet sickens by subtraction of interchangeables. I express myself muddily, *capite dolente*. I have a dulling cold. My theory is to enjoy life, but my practice is against it. I grow ominously tired of official confinement. Thirty years have I served the Philistines, and my neck is not subdued to the yoke. You don't know how wearisome it is to breathe the air of four pent walls, without relief, day after day, all the golden hours of the day between ten and four, without ease or interposition. *Tædet me harum quotidianarum formarum*, these pestilential clerk-faces always in one's dish. Oh for a few years between the grave and the desk! they are the same, save that at the latter you are the outside machine. 'The foul enchanter ——, 'letters four do form his name'—Busirare is his name in hell—that has curtailed you of some domestic comforts, hath laid a heavier hand on me, not in present infliction, but in the taking away the hope of enfranchisement. I dare not whisper to myself a pension on this side of absolute incapacitation and infirmity, till years have sucked me dry; *Otium cum indignitate*. I had thought, in a green old age (oh green thought!), to have retired to Ponder's End, emblematic name, how beautiful! in the Ware road, there to have made up my accounts with Heaven and the company, toddling about between it and Cheshunt, anon stretching on some fine

Izaac Walton morning to Hoddesdon or Amwell, careless as a beggar; but walking, walking ever till I fairly walked myself off my legs, dying walking! The hope is gone. I sit like Philomel all day (but not singing), with my breast against this thorn of a desk, with the only hope that some pulmonary affliction may relieve me. *Vide* Lord Palmerston's report of the clerks in the war-office (Debates this morning's 'Times'), by which it appears, in twenty years as many clerks have been coughed and catarrhed out of it into their freer graves. Thank you for asking about the pictures. Milton hangs over my fireside in Covent Garden (when I am there), the rest have been sold for an old song, wanting the eloquent tongue that should have set them off! You have gratified me with liking my meeting with Dodd.* For the Malvolio story, the thing is become in verity a sad task, and I eke it out with anything. If I could slip out of it I should be happy, but our chief reputed assistants have forsaken us. The Opium-eater crossed us once with a dazzling path, and hath as suddenly left us darkling; and, in short, I shall go on from dull to worse, because I cannot resist the booksellers' importunity—the old plea, you know, of authors; but, I believe, on my part, sincere. Hartley I do not so often see, but I never see him in unwelcome hour. I thoroughly love and honour him. I send you a frozen epistle, but it is winter and dead time of the year with me. May Heaven keep something like spring and summer up with you, strengthen your eyes, and make mine a little lighter to encounter with them, as I hope they shall yet and again before all are closed.

"Yours, with every kind remembrance,

"C. L.

"I had almost forgot to say I think you thoroughly right about presentation copies. I should like to see you print a book I should grudge to purchase for its size. Hang me, but I would have it, though!"

The following letter, containing the germe of the well-known "Dissertation on Roast Pig," was addressed to Coleridge, who had received a pig as a present, and attributed it erroneously to Lamb.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"Dear C.—It gives me great satisfaction to hear that the pig turned out so well—they are interesting creatures at a

* See the account of the meeting between Dodd and Jem White, in Elia's Essay "On some of the Old Actors," vol. ii., p. 151.

certain age—what a pity such buds should blow out into the maturity of rank bacon! You had all some of the crackling—and brain sauce—did you remember to rub it with butter, and gently dredge it a little, just before the crisis? Did the eyes come away kindly, with no Œdipean avulsion? Was the crackling the colour of the ripe pomegranate? Had you no cursed compliment of boiled neck of mutton before it, to blunt the edge of delicate desire? Did you flesh maiden teeth in it? Not that I sent the pig, nor can form the remotest guess what part O—— could play in the business. I never knew him give anything away in my life. He would not begin with strangers. I suspect the pig, after all, was meant for me; but, at the unlucky juncture of time being absent, the present somehow went round to Highgate. To confess an honest truth, a pig is one of those things I could never think of sending away. Teals, widgeons, snipes, barn-door fowl, ducks, geese—your tame villalio things—Welsh mutton, collars of brawn, sturgeon, fresh or pickled, your potted char, Swiss cheeses, French pies, early grapes, muscadines, I impart as freely unto my friends as to myself. They are but self-extended; but pardon me if I stop somewhere—where the fine feeling of benevolence giveth a higher smack than the sensual rarity, there my friends (or any good man) may command me; but pigs are pigs, and I myself therein am nearest to myself. Nay, I should think it an affront, an undervaluing done to Nature who bestowed such a boon upon me, if, in a churlish mood, I parted with the precious gift. One of the bitterest pangs I ever felt of remorse was when a child—my kind old aunt had strained her pocket-strings to bestow a sixpenny whole plumcake upon me. In my way home through the borough I met a venerable old man, not a mendicant, but thereabout; a look-beggar, not a verbal petitionist; and in the coxcombry of taught-charity I gave away the cake to him. I walked on a little in all the pride of an evangelical peacock, when, of a sudden, my old aunt's kindness crossed me; the sum it was to her; the pleasure she had a right to expect that I, not the old impostor, should take in eating her cake; the cursed ingratitude by which, under the colour of a Christian virtue, I had frustrated her cherished purpose. I sobbed, wept, and took it to heart so grievously, that I think I never suffered the like—and I was right. It was a piece of unfeeling hypocrisy, and proved a lesson to me ever after. The cake has long been masticated, consigned to dunghill with the ashes of that unseasonable pauper.

"But when Providence, who is better to us all than our aunts, gives me a pig, remembering my temptation and my

fall, I shall endeavour to act towards it more in the spirit of the donor's purpose.

"Yours (short of pig) to command in everything,

"C. L."

In the summer of 1822 Lamb and his sister visited Paris. The following is a hasty letter addressed to Field on his return.

TO MR. BARRON FIELD.

"My dear F.—I scribble hastily at office. Frank wants my letter presently. I and sister are just returned from Paris!! We have eaten frogs. It has been such a treat! Frogs are the nicest little delicate things—rabbity-flavoured! Imagine a Lilliputian rabbit! They fricassee them; but, in my mind, dressed, seethed, plain, with parsley and butter, would have been the decision of Apicius. Paris is a glorious, picturesque old city. London looks mean and new to it, as the town of Washington would seen after it. But they have no St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey. The Seine, so much despised by Cockneys, is exactly the size to run through a magnificent street; palaces a mile long on one side, lofty Edinbro' stone (oh the glorious antiquities!) houses on the other. The Thames disunites London and Southwark. I had Talma to supper with me. He has picked up, as I believe, an authentic portrait of Shakspeare. He paid a broker about 40*l.* English for it. It is painted on the one half of a pair of bellows—a lovely picture, corresponding with the folio head. The bellows has old carved *wings* round it, and round the visnomy is inscribed, as near as I remember, not divided into rhyme—I found out the rhyme—

Whom have we here
Stuck on this bellows
But the prince of good fellows,
Willy Shakspeare?

At top—

Oh base and coward luck!
To be here stuck.

POINS.

At bottom—

Nay! rather a glorious lot is to him assign'd,
Who, like the Almighty, rides upon the *wind*.

ISTOL.

"This is all in old carved wooden letters. The countenance smiling, sweet, and intellectual beyond measure, even as he was immeasurable. It may be a forgery. They laugh

at me, and tell me Ireland is in Paris, and has been putting off a portrait of the Black Prince. How far old wood may be imitated I cannot say. Ireland was not found out by his parchments, but by his poetry. I am confident no painter on either side the channel could have painted anything near like the face I saw. Again, would such a painter and forger have taken 40*l.* for a thing, if authentic, worth 4000*l.*? Talma is not in the secret, for he had not even found out the rhymes in the first inscription. He is coming over with it, and, my life to Southey's Thalaba, it will gain universal faith.

"The letter is wanted, and I am wanted. Imagine the blank filled up with all kind things.

"Our joint hearty remembrances to both of you. Yours, as ever,

"C. LAMB.

"Sept. 22, 1822."

Soon after Lamb's return from Paris he became acquainted with the poet of the Quakers, Bernard Barton, who, like himself, was engaged in the drudgery of figures. The pure and gentle tone of the poems of his new acquaintance was welcome to Lamb, who had more sympathy with the truth of nature in modest guise than in the affected fury of Lord Byron, or the dreamy extravagances of Shelley. Lamb had written in "Elia" of the Society of Friends with the freedom of one who, with great respect for the principles of the founders of their faith, had little in common with a sect who shunned the pleasures while they mingled in the business of the world; and a friendly expostulation on the part of Mr. Barton led to such cordial excuses as completely won the heart of the Quaker bard. Some expression which Lamb let fall at their meeting in London, from which Mr. Barton had supposed that Lamb objected to a Quaker's writing poetry as inconsistent with his creed, induced Mr. Barton to write to Lamb on his return to Woodbridge, who replied as follows:—

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"India House, 11th Sept., 1822.

"Dear Sir—You have misapprehended me sadly if you suppose that I meant to impute any inconsistency in your writing poetry with your religious profession. I do not remember what I said, but it was spoken sportively, I am sure—one of my levities, which you are not so used to as my older friends. I probably was thinking of the light in which your so indulging yourself would appear to Quakers, and put their objection into my own mouth. I would eat my words

(provided they should be written on not very coarse paper) rather than I would throw cold water upon your, and my once, harmless occupation.

"I have read Napoleon and the rest with delight. I like them for what they are and for what they are not. I have sickened on the modern rhodomontade and Byronism, and your plain Quakerish beauty has captivated me. It is all wholesome cates, ay, and toothsome too, and withal Quakerish. If I were George Fox, and George Fox licenser of the press, they should have my absolute *imprimatur*. I hope I have removed the impression.

"I am, like you, a prisoner to the desk. I have been chained to that galley thirty years; a long shot. I have almost grown to the wood. If no *imaginative*, I am sure I am a *figurative* writer. Do Friends allow puns? *verbal* equivocations? they are unjustly accused of it, and I did my best in the 'Imperfect Sympathies' to vindicate them. I am very tired of clerking it, but have no remedy. Did you see a sonnet to this purpose in the Examiner?

> 'Who first invented work, and bound the free
> And holyday rejoicing spirit down
> To the ever-haunting importunity
> Of business, in the green fields and the town,
> To plough, loom, anvil, spade; and oh, most sad,
> To that dry drudgery at the desk's dead wood?
> Who but the being unbless'd, alien from good,
> Sabbathless Satan! he who his unglad
> Task ever plies mid rotatory burnings,
> That round and round incalculably reel;
> For wrath Divine hath made him like a wheel
> In that red realm from which are no returnings;
> Where, toiling and turmoiling, ever and aye,
> He and his thoughts keep pensive working-day.'

"I fancy the sentiment expressed above will be nearly your own. The expression of it, probably, would not so well suit with a follower of John Woolman. But I do not know whether diabolism is a part of your creed, or where, indeed, to find an exposition of your creed at all. In feelings and matters not dogmatical, I hope I am half a Quaker. Believe me, with great respect, yours,

"C. LAMB.

"I shall always be happy to see or hear from you."

Encouraged by Lamb's kindness, Mr. Barton continued the correspondence, which became the most frequent in which Lamb had engaged for many years. The following letter is in acknowledgment of a publication of Mr. Barton's, chiefly directed to oppose the theories and tastes of Lord Byron and his friends.

TO BERNRAD BARTON.

East India House, 9th Oct., 1822.

"Dear Sir—I am ashamed not sooner to have acknowledged your letter and poem. I think the latter very temperate, very serious, and very seasonable. I do not think it will convert the club at Pisa, neither do I think it will satisfy the bigots on our side the water. Something like a parody on the song of Ariel would please them better:

'Full fathom five the Atheist lies,
Of his bones are hell-dice made.'

"I want time and fancy to fill up the rest. I sincerely sympathize with you in your confinement. Of time, health, and riches, the first in order is not last in excellence. Riches are chiefly good, because they give us time. What a weight of wearisome prison-hours have I to look back and forward to, as quite cut out of life; and the sting of the thing is, that for six hours every day I have no business which I could not contract into two, if they would let me work task-work.

* * * * * *

"I am returning a poor letter. I was formerly a great scribbler in that way, but my hand is out of order. If I said my head too, I should not be very much out, but I will tell no tales of myself; I will therefore end (after my best thanks, with a hope to see you again some time in London), begging you to accept this letteret for a letter—a leveret makes a better present than a grown hare, and short troubles (as the old excuse goes) are best.

"I remain, dear sir, yours truly,

"C. Lamb."

The next letter will speak for itself.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"23d Dec., 1822.

"Dear Sir—I have been so distracted with business and one thing or other, I have not had a quiet quarter of an hour for epistolary purposes. Christmas, too, is come, which always puts a rattle into my morning scull. It is a visiting, unquiet, unquakerish season. I get more and more in love with solitude, and proportionately hampered with company. I hope you have some holydays at this period. I have one day—Christmas day; alas! too few to commemorate the season. All work and no play dulls me. Company is not play, but many times hard work. To play is for a man to do what he pleases, or to do nothing—to go about soothing his particular

fancies. I have lived to a time of life to have outlived the good hours, the nine o'clock suppers, with a bright hour or two to clear up in afterward. Now you cannot get tea before that hour, and then sit gaping, music-bothered, perhaps, till half past twelve brings up the tray; and what you steal of convivial enjoyment after is heavily paid for in the disquiet of to-morrow's head.

"I am pleased with your liking 'John Woodvil,' and amused with your knowledge of our drama being confined to Shakspeare and Miss Baillie. What a world of fine territory between Land's End and Johnny Groat's have you missed traversing! I could almost envy you to have so much to read. I feel as if I had read all the books I want to read. Oh! to forget Fielding, Steele, &c., &c., and read 'em *new!*

"Can you tell me a likely place where I could pick up, cheap, Fox's Journal? There are no Quaker circulating libraries! Elwood, too, I must have. I rather grudge that S—— has taken up the history of your people; I am afraid he will put in some levity. I am afraid I am not quite exempt from that fault in certain magazine articles, where I have introduced mention of them. Were they to do again, I would reform them. Why should not you write a poetical account of your old worthies, deducing them from Fox to Woolman? but I remember you did talk of something of that kind, as a counterpart to the 'Ecclesiastical Sketches.' But would not a poem be more consecutive than a string of sonnets? You have no martyrs *quite to the fire*, I think, among you; but plenty of heroic confessors, spirit-martyrs, lamb-lions. Think of it; it would be better than a series of sonnets on 'Eminent Bankers.' I like a hit at our way of life, though it does well for me, better than anything short of *all one's time to one's self;* for which alone I rankle with envy at the rich. Books are good, and pictures are good, and money to buy them therefore good, but to buy *time!* in other words, life!

"The 'Compliments of the Time' to you should end my letter; to a Friend, I suppose I must say the 'Sincerity of the Season;' I hope they both mean the same. With excuses for this hastily-penned note, believe me, with great respect,

"C. LAMB."

In this winter Mr. Walter Wilson, one of the friends of Lamb's youth, applied to him for information respecting De Foe, whose life he was about to write. The renewal of the acquaintance was very pleasant to Lamb, who many years before used to take daily walks with Wilson, and to call him "brother." The following is Lamb's reply.

TO MR. WALTER WILSON.

"E. I. H., 16th December, 1822.

"Dear Wilson—*Lightning* I was going to call you. You must have thought me negligent in not answering your letter sooner. But I have a habit of never writing letters but at the office; 'tis so much time cribbed out of the Company; and I am but just got out of the thick of a tea-sale, in which most of the entry of notes, deposites, &c., usually falls to my share.

"I have nothing of De Foe's but two or three novels, and the 'Plague History.' I can give you no information about him. As a slight general character of what I remember of them (for I have not looked into them latterly), I would say that, in the appearance of *truth*, in all the incidents and conversations that occur in them, they exceed any works of fiction I am acquainted with. It is perfect illusion. The *author* never appears in these self-narratives (for so they ought to be called, or rather autobiographies), but the *narrator* chains us down to an implicit belief in everything he says. There is all the minute detail of a logbook in it. Dates are painfully pressed upon the memory. Facts are repeated over and over in varying phrases, till you cannot choose but believe them. It is like reading evidence in a court of justice. So anxious the story-teller seems that the truth should be clearly comprehended, that when he has told us a matter-of-fact or a motive, in a line or two farther down he *repeats* it, with his favourite figure of speech, 'I say,' so and so, though he had made it abundantly plain before. This is in imitation of the common people's way of speaking, or rather of the way in which they are addressed by a master or mistress, who wishes to impress something upon their memories, and has a wonderful effect upon matter-of-fact readers. Indeed, it is to such principally that he writes. His style is everywhere beautiful, but plain and *homely*. Robinson Crusoe is delightful to all ranks and classes, but it is easy to see that it is written in phraseology peculiarly adapted to the lower conditions of readers; hence it is an especial favourite with seafaring men, poor boys, servant-maids, &c. His novels are capital kitchen-reading, while they are worthy, from their deep interest, to find a shelf in the libraries of the wealthiest and the most learned. His passion for *matter-of-fact narrative* sometimes betrayed him into a long relation of common incidents, which might happen to any man, and have no interest but the intense appearance of truth in them to recommend them. The whole latter half or two thirds of 'Colonel Jack' is of this description. The beginning of 'Colonel Jack' is the most affecting natural picture of a young thief that was ever drawn. His

losing the stolen money in the hollow of a tree, and finding it again when he was in despair, and then being in equal distress at not knowing how to dispose of it, and several similar touches in the early history of the colonel, evince a deep knowledge of human nature; and, putting out of question the superior *romantic* interest of the latter, in my mind, very much exceed Crusoe. 'Roxana' (first edition) is the next in interest, though he left out the best part of it in subsequent editions from a foolish hypercriticism of his friend Southerne. But 'Moll Flanders,' the 'Account of the Plague,' &c., are all of one family, and have the same stamp of character. Believe me, with friendly recollections, *Brother* (as I used to call you),

"Yours,
"C. LAMB."

How bitterly Lamb felt his East India bondage has abundantly appeared from his letters during many years. Yet there never was wanting a secret consciousness of the benefits which it ensured for him, the precious independence which he won by his hours of toil, and the freedom of his mind, to work only "at its own sweet will," which his confinement to the desk obtained. This sense of the blessings which a fixed income, derived from ascertained duties, confers, broke out on the wish of his fellow-labourer, Bernard Barton, to cast off the trammels of the banking-house, and rely on literature for subsistence; and in the generous dissuasion of his friend from an act of folly, which he had perhaps been tempted to contemplate by Lamb's own complainings, made a noble amends to his leger for all his unjust reproaches. The references to the booksellers have the colouring of fantastical exaggeration, by which he delighted to give effect to the immediate feeling; but, making allowance for this mere play of fancy, how just is the following advice—how wholesome for every youth who hesitates whether he shall abandon the certain reward of plodding industry for the splendid miseries of authorship![*]

* It is singular that, some years before, Mr. Barton had received similar advice from a very different poet—Lord Byron. As the letter has never been published, and it may be interesting to compare the expressions of two men so different on the same subject, I subjoin it here:—

"TO BERNARD BARTON, ESQ.

"St. James's-street, June 1, 1812.

"Sir—The most satisfactory answer to the concluding part of your letter is, that Mr. Murray will republish your volume if you still retain your inclination for the experiment, which, I trust, will be successful. Some weeks ago my friend Mr. Rogers showed me some of the stanzas in MS., and I then expressed my opinion of their merit, which a further perusal of the printed

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"9th January, 1823.

"Throw yourself on the world without any rational plan of support beyond what the chance employ of booksellers would afford you!

"Throw yourself rather, my dear sir, from the steep Tarpeian rock, slap-dash headlong upon iron spikes. If you have but five consolatory minutes between the desk and the bed, make much of them, and live a century in them rather than turn slave to the booksellers. They are Turks and Tartars when they have poor authors at their beck. Hitherto you have been at arm's length from them. Come not within their grasp. I have known many authors want for bread, some repining, others enjoying the blessed security of a spunging-house, all agreeing they had rather have been tailors, weavers—what not? rather than the things they were. I have known some starved, some to go mad, one dear friend literally dying in a workhouse. You know not what a rapacious set these booksellers are. Ask even Southey, who (a single case almost) has made a fortune by book-drudgery, what he has found them. Oh, you know not, may you never know, the miseries of subsisting by authorship! 'Tis a pretty appendage to a

volume has given me no reason to revoke. I mention this, as it may not be disagreeable to you to learn that I entertained a very favourable opinion of your powers before I was aware that such sentiments were reciprocal. Waving your obliging expressions as to my own productions, for which I thank you very sincerely, and assure you that I think not lightly of the praise of one whose approbation is valuable, will you allow me to talk to you candidly, not critically, on the subject of yours? You will not suspect me of a wish to discourage, since I pointed out to the publisher the propriety of complying with your wishes. I think more highly of your poetical talents than it would perhaps gratify you to have expressed; for I believe, from what I observe of your mind, that you are above flattery. To come to the point, you deserve success; but we knew before Addison wrote his Cato that desert does not always command it. But suppose it attained,

"'You know what ills the author's life assail,
Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail.'

Do not renounce writing, *but never trust entirely to authorship.* If you have a profession, retain it; it will be like Prior's fellowship, a last and sure resource. Compare Mr. Rogers with other authors of the day; assuredly he is among the first of living poets, but is it to that he owes his station in society, and his intimacy in the best circles?—no, it is to his prudence and respectability. The world (a bad one, I own) courts him because he has no occasion to court it. He is a poet, nor is he less so because he is something more. I am not sorry to hear that you were not tempted by the vicinity of Capel Lofft, Esq.—though, if he had done for you what he has for the Bloomfields, I should never have laughed at his rage for patronising. But a truly well constituted mind will ever be independent. That you may be so is my sincere wish; and if others think as well of your poetry as I do, you will have no cause to complain of your readers. Believe me,

"Your obliged and obedient servant,

"BYRON."

situation like yours or mine; but a slavery, worse than all slavery, to be a bookseller's dependant, to drudge your brains for pots of ale and breasts of mutton, *to change your* FREE THOUGHTS *and* VOLUNTARY NUMBERS *for ungracious* TASKWORK. The booksellers hate us. The reason I take to be, that contrary to other trades, in which the master gets all the credit (a jeweller or silversmith, for instance), and the journeyman, who really does the fine work, is in the background: in *our* work the world gives all the credit to us, whom *they* consider as *their* journeymen, and therefore do they hate us, and cheat us, and oppress us, and would wring the blood of us out, to put another sixpence in their mechanic pouches!

* * * * * *

"Keep to your bank, and the bank will keep you. Trust not to the public; you may hang, starve, drown yourself for anything that worthy *personage* cares. I bless every star, that Providence, not seeing good to make me independent, has seen it next good to settle me upon the stable foundation of Leadenhall. Sit down, good B. B., in the banking-office; what! is there not from six to eleven, P.M., six days in the week, and is there not all Sunday? Fy, what a superfluity of man's time, if you could think so! Enough for relaxation, mirth, converse, poetry, good thoughts, quiet thoughts. Oh the corroding, torturing, tormenting thoughts that disturb the brain of the unlucky wight who must draw upon it for daily sustenance! Henceforth I retract all my fond complaints of mercantile employment; look upon them as lover's quarrels. I was but half in earnest. Welcome dead timber of the desk, that gives me life. A little grumbling is a wholesome medicine for the spleen, but in my inner heart do I approve and embrace this our close but unharassing way of life. I am quite serious. If you can send me Fox, I will not keep it *six weeks*, and will return it, with warm thanks to yourself and friend, without blot or dog's-ear. You will much oblige me by this kindness.

"Yours truly,

"C. LAMB."

Lamb thus communicated to Mr. Barton his prosecution of his researches into Primitive Quakerism.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"February, 1823.

"My dear Sir—I have read quite through the ponderous folio of George Fox. Pray how may I return it to Mr. Skewell, at Ipswich? I fear to send such a treasure by a stage-coach; not that I am afraid of the coachman or the guard

reading it, but it might be lost. Can you put me in a way of sending it safely? The kind-hearted owner trusted it to me for six *months*; I think I was about as many *days* in getting through it, and I do not think that I skipped a word of it. I have quoted G. F. in my 'Quaker Meeting,' as having said he was 'lifted up in spirit' (which I felt at the time to be not a Quaker phrase), 'and the judge and the jury were as dead men under his feet.' I find no such words in his journal, and I did not get them from Sewell, and the latter sentence I am sure I did not mean to invent; I must have put some other Quaker's words into his mouth. Is it a fatality in me, that everything I touch turns into a 'a lye?' I once quoted two lines from a translation of Dante, which Hazlitt very greatly admired, and quoted in a book as proof of the stupendous power of that poet, but no such lines are to be found in the translation, which has been searched for the purpose. I must have dreamed them, for I am quite certain I did not forge them knowingly. What a misfortune to have a lying memory! Your description of Mr. M——'s place makes me long for a pippin, and some carraways, and a cup of sack, in his orchard, when the sweets of the night came in. Farewell.

"C. LAMB."

In the beginning of the year 1823, the "Essays of Elia," collected in a volume, were published by Messrs. Taylor and Hessey, who had become the proprietors of the "London Magazine." The book met with a rapid sale, while the magazine in which its contents had appeared declined. The anecdote of the three Quakers gravely walking out of the inn where they had taken tea on the road, on an extortionate demand, one after the other, without paying anything,* had excited some gentle remonstrance on the part of Barton's sister, to which Lamb thus replied.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"Dear Sir—The approbation of my little book by your sister is very pleasing to me. The Quaker incident did not happen to me, but to Carlisle the surgeon, from whose mouth I have twice heard it, at an interval of ten or twelve years, with little or no variation, and have given it exactly as I could remember it. The gloss which your sister or you have put upon it does not strike me as correct. Carlisle drew no inference from it against the honesty of the Quakers, but only in favour of their surprising coolness; that they should be capable of committing a good joke, with an ut-

* See Elia's "Imperfect Sympathies," vol. ii., p. 73.

ter insensibility to its being any jest at all. I have reason to believe in the truth of it, because, as I have said, I heard him repeat it without variation at such an interval. The story loses sadly in print, for Carlisle is the best storyteller I ever heard. The idea of the discovery of roasting pigs I also borrowed from my friend Manning, and am willing to confess both my plagiarisms. Should fate so order it that you shall be in town with your sister, mine bids me say that she shall have great pleasure in being introduced to her.

* * * * * *

"They have dragged me again into the magazine, but I feel the spirit of the thing in my own mind quite gone. 'Some brains' (I think Ben Jonson says it) 'will endure but one skinning.' We are about to have an inundation of poetry from the Lakes—Wordsworth and Southey are coming up strong from the north. How did you like Hartley's sonnets? The first, at least, is vastly fine. I am ashamed of the shabby letters I send, but I am by nature anything but neat. Therein my mother bore me no Quaker. I never could seal a letter without dropping the wax on one side, besides scalding my fingers. I never had a seal, too, of my own. Writing to a great man lately, who is moreover very heraldic, I borrowed a seal of a friend who, by the female side, claims the protectoral arms of Cromwell. How they must have puzzled my correspondent! My letters are generally charged as double at the postoffice, from their inveterate clumsiness of foldure; so you must not take it disrespectful to yourself if I send you such ungainly scraps. I think I lose 100*l.* a year at the India House, owing solely to my want of neatness in making up accounts. How I puzzle 'em out at last is the wonder. I have to do with millions!

"It is time to have done my incoherences.

"Believe me yours truly,

"C. LAMB."

Lamb thus records a meeting with the poets.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"April, 1823.

"Dear Sir—I wished for you yesterday. I dined in Parnassus, with Wordsworth, Coleridge, Rogers, and Tom Moore—half the poetry of England constellated and clustered in Gloucester Place! It was a delightful evening! Coleridge was in his finest vein of talk—had all the talk; and let 'em talk as they will of the envy of poets, I am sure not one there but was content to be nothing but a listener. The Muses

were dumb while Apollo lectured on his and their fine art. It is a lie that poets are envious; I have known the best of them, and can speak to it, that they give each other their merits, and are the kindest critics as well as the best authors. I am scribbling a muddy epistle with an aching head, for we did not quaff Hippocrene last night; marry, it was hippocrass rather. Pray accept this as a letter in the mean time."

* * * * * *

Here is an apology for a letter, referring to the vignette on the titlepage of one of his friend's books.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"May, 1823.

"Dear Sir—I am vexed to be two letters in your debt, but I have been quite out of the vein lately. A philosophical treatise is wanting of the causes of the backwardness with which persons, after a certain time of life, set about writing a letter. I always feel as if I had nothing to say, and the performance generally justifies the presentiment.

* * * * * *

"I do not exactly see why the goose and little goslings should emblematize *a Quaker poet that has no children* or but one. But, after all, perhaps it is a pelican. The '*Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin*' around it I cannot decipher. The songster of the night pouring out her effusions amid an audience of madge owlets would be at least intelligible. A full pause here comes upon me as if I had not a word more left. I will shake my brain. Once! Twice!—nothing comes up. George Fox recommends waiting on these occasions. I wait. Nothing comes. G. Fox—that sets me off again. I have finished the 'Journal,' and 400 more pages of the '*Doctrinals*,' which I picked up for 7*s.* 6*d.* If I get on at this rate, the society will be in danger of having two Quaker poets to patronise."

* * * * * *

The following letter was addressed to Mr. Procter, in acknowledgment of a miniature of Pope which he had presented to Lamb.

TO MR. PROCTER.

"Dear Lad—You must think me a brute beast, a rhinoceros, never to have acknowledged the receipt of your precious present. But, indeed, I am none of those shocking things, but have arrived at that indisposition to letter-writing which would make it a hard exertion to write three lines to a king

to spare a friend's life. Whether it is that the Magazine paying me so much a page, I am loath to throw away composition—how much a sheet do you give your correspondents? I have hung up Pope, and a gem it is, in my town room; I hope for your approval. Though it accompanies the 'Essay on Man,' I think that was not the poem he is here meditating. He would have looked up, somehow affectedly, as if he were just conceiving 'Awake, my St. John.' Neither is he in the 'Rape of the Lock' mood exactly. I think he has just made out the last lines of the 'Epistle to Jervis,' between gay and tender,

'And other beauties envy Wortley's eyes.'

"I'll be hanged if that isn't the line. He is brooding over it with a dreamy phantom of Lady Mary floating before him. He is thinking which is the earliest possible day and hour that she will first see it. What a miniature piece of gentility it is! Why did you give it me? I do not like you enough to give you anything so good.

"I have dined with T. Moore and breakfasted with Rogers since I saw you; have much to say about them when we meet, which, I trust, will be in a week or two. I have been overwatched and overpoeted since Wordsworth has been in town. I was obliged, for health sake, to wish him gone; but, now he is gone, I feel a great loss. I am going to Dalston to recruit, and have serious thoughts of—altering my condition, that is, of taking to sobriety. What do you advise me?

"Rogers spake very kindly of you, as everybody does, and none with so much reason as your

"C. L."

CHAPTER XIII.

[1823.]

Lamb's Controversy with Southey.

In the year 1823 Lamb appeared, for the first and only time of his life, before the public as an assailant; and the object of his attack was one of his oldest and fastest friends, Mr. Southey. It might, indeed, have been predicted of Lamb, that if ever he *did* enter the arena of personal controversy, it would be with one who had obtained a place in his affection;

for no motive less powerful than the resentment of friendship which deemed itself wounded could place him in a situation so abhorrent to his habitual thoughts. Lamb had, up to this time, little reason to love reviews or reviewers; and the connexion of Southey with "The Quarterly Review," while he felt that it raised, and softened, and refined the tone of that powerful organ of a great party, sometimes vexed him for his friend. His indignation also had been enlisted on behalf of Hazlitt and Hunt, who had been attacked in this work in a manner which he regarded as unfair; for the critics had not been content with descanting on the peculiarities in the style and taste of the one, or reprobating the political or personal vehemence of the other—which were fair subjects of controversy—but spoke of them with a contempt which every man of letters had a right to resent as unjust. He had been much annoyed by an allusion to himself in an article on "Hazlitt's Political Essays," which appeared in the Review for November, 1819, as "one whom we should wish to see in more respectable company;" for he felt a compliment paid him at the expense of a friend as a grievance far beyond any direct attack on himself. He was also exceedingly hurt by a reference made in an article on Dr. Reid's work "On Nervous Affections," which appeared in July, 1822, to an essay which he had contributed some years before to a collection of tracts published by his friend, Mr. Bazil Montague, on the effect of spirituous liquors, entitled "The Confessions of a Drunkard." The contribution of this paper is a striking proof of the prevalence of Lamb's personal regards over all selfish feelings and tastes; for no one was less disposed than he to Montague's theory or practice of abstinence; yet he was willing to gratify his friend by this terrible picture of the extreme effects of intemperance, of which his own occasional deviations from the right line of sobriety had given him hints and glimpses. The reviewer of Dr. Reid, adverting to this essay, speaks of it as "a fearful picture of the consequences of intemperance, which WE happen to know is a true tale." How far it was from actual truth, the "Essays of Elia," the production of a later day, in which the maturity of his feeling, humour, and reason is exhibited, may sufficiently show. These articles were not written by Mr. Southey, but they prepared Lamb to feel acutely any attack from the Review; and a paragraph in an article in the number for July, 1823, entitled "Progress of Infidelity," in which he recognised the hand of his old friend, gave poignancy to all the painful associations which had arisen from the same work, and concentrated them in one bitter feeling. After recording some of the confessions

of unbelievers of the wretchedness which their infidelity brought on them, Mr. Southey thus proceeded:—

"Unbelievers have not always been honest enough thus to express their real feelings; but this we know concerning them, that when they have renounced their birthright of hope, they have not been able to divest themselves of fear. From the nature of the human mind, this might be presumed, and, in fact, it is so. They may deaden the heart and stupify the conscience, but they cannot destroy the imaginative faculty. There is a remarkable proof of this in 'Elia's Essays,' a book which wants only a sounder religious feeling to be as delightful as it is original. In that upon 'Witches and the other Night Fears,' he says, 'It is not book, or picture, or the stories of foolish servants which create these terrors in children; they can, at most, but give them a direction. Dear little T. H., who, of all children, has been brought up with the most scrupulous exclusion of every taint of superstition, who was never allowed to hear of goblin or apparition, or scarcely to be told of bad men, or to hear or read of any distressing story, finds all this world of fear from which he has been so rigidly excluded *ab extra*, in his own "thick-coming fancies," and from his little midnight pillow this nursechild of optimism will start at shapes, unborrowed of tradition, in sweats to which the reveries of the well-damned murderer are tranquillity.' This poor child, instead of being trained up in the way he should go, had been bred in the ways of modern philosophy; he had systematically been prevented from knowing anything of that Saviour who said, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven;' care had been taken that he should not pray to God, nor lie down at night in reliance upon his good providence! Nor let it be supposed that terrors of imagination belong to childhood alone. The reprobate heart, which has discarded all love of God, cannot so easily rid itself of the fear of the devil; and even when it succeeds in that also, it will then create a hell for itself. We have heard of unbelievers who thought it probable that they should be awake in their graves! and this was the opinion for which they had exchanged a Christian's hope of immortality!"

The allusion in this paragraph was really, as Lamb was afterward convinced, intended by Mr. Southey to assist the sale of the book. In haste, having expunged a word which he thought improper, he wrote "*sounder* religious feeling," not satisfied with the epithet, but meaning to correct it in the proof, which, unfortunately, was never sent him. Lamb saw it

on his return from a month's pleasant holydays at Hastings, and expressed his first impression respecting it in a letter

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"Dear Sir—I have just returned from Hastings, where are exquisite views and walks, and where I have given up my soul to walking, and I am now suffering sedentary contrasts. I am a long time reconciling to town after one of these excursions. Home is become strange, and will remain so yet a while; *home is the most unforgiving of friends, and always resents absence*; I know its old cordial looks will return, but they are slow in clearing up. That is one of the features of this our galley-slavery, that peregrination ended makes things worse. I felt out of water (with all the sea about me) at Hastings; and, just as I had learned to domicilitate there, I must come back to find a home which is no home. I abused Hastings, but learned its value. There are spots, inland bays, &c., which realize the notions of Juan Fernandez. The best thing I lit upon by accident was a small country church (by whom or when built unknown), standing bare and single in the midst of a grove, with no house or appearance of habitation within a quarter of a mile, only passages diverging from it through beautiful woods to so many farmhouses. There it stands, like the first idea of a church, before parishioners were thought of, nothing but birds for its congregation; or like a hermit's oratory (the hermit dead), or a mausoleum; its effects singularly impressive, like a church found in a desert isle to startle Crusoe with a home image: you must make out a vicar and a congregation from fancy, for surely none come there; yet it wants not its pulpit, and its font, and all the seemly additaments of *our* worship.

"Southey has attacked 'Elia' on the score of infidelity, in the Quarterly article, 'Progress of Infidelity.' He might have spared an old friend such a construction of a few careless flights, that meant no harm to religion; but I love and respect Southey, and will not retort. I hate his review, and his being a reviewer. The hint he has droppod will knock the sale of the book on the head, which was almost at a stop before. Let it stop—there is corn in Egypt while there is cash at Leadenhall! You and I are something besides being writers, thank God!

"Yours truly,
"C. L."

This feeling was a little diverted by the execution of a scheme, rather suddenly adopted, of removing to a neat cot-

tage at Islington, where Lamb first found himself installed in the dignity of a householder. He thus describes his residence

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"2d September, 1823.

"Dear B. B.—What will you say to my not writing? You cannot say I do not write now. When you come Londonward, you will find me no longer in Covent Garden; I have a cottage in Colebrook Row, Islington; a cottage, for it is detached; a white house, with six good rooms in it; the New River (rather elderly by this time) runs (if a moderate walking pace can be so termed) close to the foot of the house; and behind is a spacious garden, with vines (I assure you), pears, strawberries, parsnips, leeks, carrots, cabbages, to delight the heart of old Alcinous. You enter without passage into a cheerful dining-room, all studded over and rough with old books; and above is a lightsome drawing-room, three windows, full of choice prints. I feel like a great lord, never having had a house before.

"The 'London,' I fear, falls off. I linger among its creaking rafters like the last rat; it will topple down if they don't get some buttresses. They have pulled down three; Hazlitt, Procter, and their best stay, kind, light-hearted W——, their Janus. The best is, neither of our fortunes is concerned in it.

"I heard of you from Mr. P—— this morning, and that gave a fillip to my laziness, which has been intolerable; but I am so taken up with pruning and gardening, quite a new sort of occupation to me. I have gathered my jargonels, but my Windsor pears are backward. The former were of exquisite raciness. I do now sit under my own vine, and contemplate the growth of vegetable nature. I can now understand in what sense they speak of *father Adam*. I recognise the paternity while I watch my tulips. I almost feel with him too; for the first day I turned a drunken gardener (as he let in the serpent) into my Eden, and he laid about him, lopping off some choice boughs, &c., which hung over from a neighbour's garden, and, in his blind zeal, laid waste a shade which had sheltered their window from the gaze of passers by. The old gentlewoman (fury made her not handsome) could scarcely be reconciled by all my fine words. There was no buttering her parsnips. She talked of the law. What a lapse to commit on the first day of my happy 'garden state!'

"I hope you transmitted the Fox Journal to its owner, with suitable thanks. Pray accept this for a letter, and believe me, with sincere regards,

"Yours,

"C. L."

In the next letter to Barton Lamb referred to an intended letter to Southey in the Magazine.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"September, 1823.

"Dear Sir—I have again been reading your 'Stanzas on Bloomfield,' which are the most appropriate that can be imagined—sweet with Doric delicacy. I like that—

'Our own more chaste Theocritus'—

just hinting at the fault of the Grecian. I love that stanza ending with,

'Words, phrases, fashions pass away;
But truth and nature live through all.'

But I shall omit in my own copy the one stanza which alludes to Lord B., I suppose. It spoils the sweetness and continuity of the feeling. Cannot we think of Burns, or Thomson, without sullying the thought with a reflection out of place upon Lord Rochester? These verses might have been inscribed upon a tomb; are, in fact, an epitaph; satire does not look pretty upon a tombstone. Besides, there is a quotation in it, always bad in verse, seldom advisable in prose. I doubt if their having been in a paper will not prevent T. and H. from insertion; but I shall have a thing to send in a day or two, and shall try them. Omitting that stanza, a very little alteration is wanting in the beginning of the next. You see I use freedom. How happily (I flatter not) you have brought in his subjects; and (I suppose) his favourite measure, though I am not acquainted with any of his writings but the 'Farmer's Boy.' He dined with me once, and his manners took me exceedingly.

"I rejoice that you forgive my long silence. I continue to estimate my own roof comforts highly. How could I remain all my life a lodger? My garden thrives (I am told), though I have yet reaped nothing but some tiny salads and withered carrots. But a garden's a garden anywhere, and twice a garden in London.

* * * * * *

"Do you go on with your 'Quaker Sonnets?' have 'em ready with 'Southey's Book of the Church.' I meditate a letter to S. in the 'London,' which, perhaps, will meet the fate of the sonnet.

"Excuse my brevity, for I write painfully at office, liable to a hundred callings off; and I can never sit down to an epistle elsewhere. I read or walk. If you return this letter

to the postoffice, I think they will return fourpence, seeing it is but half a one. Believe me, though,

"Entirely yours,
"C. L."

The contemplated expostulation with Southey was written, and appeared in the "London Magazine for October, 1823." Lamb did not print it in any subsequent collection of his essays; but I give it now, as I have reason to know that its publication will cause no painful feelings in the mind of Mr. Southey, and as it forms the only ripple on the kindliness of Lamb's personal and literary life.

LETTER OF ELIA TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

"Sir—You have done me an unfriendly office, without, perhaps, much considering what you were doing. You have given an ill name to my poor lucubrations. In a recent paper on Infidelity, you usher in a conditional commendation of them with an exception; which, preceding the encomium, and taking up nearly the same space with it, must impress your readers with the notion that the objectionable parts in them are at least equal in quantity to the pardonable. The censure is, in fact, the criticism; the praise—a concession merely. Exceptions usually follow, to qualify praise or blame. But there stands your reproof, in the very front of your notice, in ugly characters, like some bugbear, to frighten all good Christians from purchasing. Through you I am become an object of suspicion to preceptors of youth and fathers of families. '*A book which wants only a sounder religious feeling to be as delightful as it is original.*' With no further explanation, what must your readers conjecture, but that my little volume is some vehicle for heresy or infidelity? The quotation, which you honour me by subjoining, oddly enough, is of a character which bespeaks a temperament in the writer the very reverse of *that* your reproof goes to insinuate. Had you been taxing me with superstition, the passage would have been pertinent to the censure. Was it worth your while to go so far out of your way to affront the feelings of an old friend, and commit yourself by an irrelevant quotation, for the pleasure of reflecting upon a poor child, an exile at Genoa?

"I am at a loss what particular essay you had in view (if my poor ramblings amount to that appellation) when you were in such a hurry to thrust in your objection, like bad news, foremost. Perhaps the paper on 'Saying Graces' was the obnoxious feature. I have endeavoured there to rescue a voluntary duty—good in place, but never, as I remember, lit-

erally commanded—from the charge of an undecent formality. Rightly taken, sir, that paper was not against graces, but want of grace; not against the ceremony, but the carelessness and slovenliness so often observed in the performance of it.

"Or was it *that* on the 'New Year'—in which I have described the feelings of the merely natural man on a consideration of the amazing change which is supposable to take place on our removal from this fleshly scene? If men would honestly confess their misgivings (which few men will), there are times when the strongest Christian of us, I believe, has reeled under questionings of such staggering obscurity. I do not accuse you of this weakness. There are some who tremblingly reach out shaking hands to the guidance of Faith—others who stoutly venture into the dark (their Human Confidence their leader, whom they mistake for Faith); and, investing themselves beforehand with cherubic wings, as they fancy, find their new robes as familiar, and fitting to their supposed growth and stature in godliness, as the coat they left off yesterday—some whose hope totters upon crutches—others who stalk into futurity upon stilts.

"The contemplation of a Spiritual World—which, without the addition of a misgiving conscience, is enough to shake some natures to their foundation—is smoothly got over by others, who shall float over the black billows, in their little boat of No-distrust, as unconcernedly as over a summer sea. The difference is chiefly constitutional.

"One man shall love his friends and his friends' faces; and, under the uncertainty of conversing with them again, in the same manner and familiar circumstances of sight, speech, &c., as upon earth—in a moment of no irreverent weakness—for a dream-while—no more—would be almost content, for a reward of a life of virtue (if he could ascribe such acceptance to his lame performances), to take up his portion with those he loved, and was made to love, in this good world, which he knows—which was created so lovely, beyond his deservings. Another, embracing a more exalted vision—so that he might receive indefinite additaments of power, knowledge, beauty, glory, &c.—is ready to forego the recognition of humbler individualities of earth, and the old familiar faces. The shapings of our heavens are the modifications of our constitution; and Mr. Feeble Mind or Mr. Great Heart is born in every one of us.

"Some (and such have been accounted the safest divines) have shrunk from pronouncing upon the final state of any man; nor dare they pronounce the case of Judas to be des-

perate. Others (with stronger optics), as plainly as with the eye of flesh, shall behold a *given king* in bliss, and a *given chamberlain* in torment; even to the eternizing of a cast of the eye in the latter, his own self-mocked and good-humouredly-borne deformity on earth, but supposed to aggravate the uncouth and hideous expression of his pangs in the other place. That one man can presume so far, and that another would, with shuddering, disclaim such confidences, is, I believe, an effect of the nerves purely.

"If in either of these papers or elsewhere I have been betrayed into some levities—not affronting the sanctuary, but glancing, perhaps, at some of the outskirts and extreme edges, the debateable land between the holy and the profane regions—(for the admixture of man's inventions, twisting themselves with the name of the religion itself, has artfully made it difficult to touch even the alloy without, in some men's estimation, soiling the fine gold)—if I have sported with the purlieus of serious matter—it was, I dare say, a humour—be not startled, sir—which I have unwittingly derived from yourself. You have all your life been making a jest of the devil. Not of the scriptural meaning of that dark essence—personal or allegorical; for the nature is nowhere plainly delivered. I acquit you of intentional irreverence. But, indeed, you have made wonderfully free with, and been mighty pleasant upon, the popular idea and attributes of him. A noble lord, your brother visionary, has scarcely taken greater liberties with the material keys, and merely Catholic notion of St. Peter. You have flattered him in prose; you have chanted him in goodly odes. You have been his jester; volunteer laureate, and self-elected court poet to Beelzebub.

"You have never ridiculed, I believe, what you thought to be religion, but you are always girding at what some pious, but perhaps mistaken, folks think to be so. For this reason I am sorry to hear that you are engaged upon a life of George Fox. I know you will fall into the error of intermixing some comic stuff with your seriousness. The Quakers tremble at the subject in your hands. The Methodists are shy of you upon account of *their* founder. But, above all, our popish brethren are most in your debt. The errors of that church have proved a fruitful source to your scoffing vein. Their legend has been a golden one to you. And here your friends, sir, have noticed a notable inconsistency. To the imposing rites, the solemn penances, devout austerities of that communion; the affecting though erring piety of their hermits; the silence and solitude of the Chartreux—their crossings, their holy waters—their Virgin, and their saints—to these, they

say, you have been indebted for the best feelings and the richest imagery of your Epic poetry. You have drawn copious draughts upon Loretto. We thought at one time you were going post to Rome; but that, in the facetious commentaries which it is your custom to append so plentifully, and (some say) injudiciously, to your loftiest performances in this kind, you spurn the uplifted toe, which you but just now seemed to court; leave his holiness in the lurch; and show him a fair pair of Protestant heels under your Romish vestment. When we think you already at the wicket, suddenly a violent cross wind blows you transverse—

> 'Ten thousand leagues awry. * *
> * * * * Then might we see
> Cowls, hoods, and habits, with their wearers, toss'
> And flutter'd into rags; then relics, beads,
> Indulgences, dispenses, pardons, bulls,
> The sport of winds.'

You pick up pence by showing the hallowed bones, shrine, and crucifix; and you take money a second time by exposing the trick of them afterward. You carry your verse to Castle Angelo for sale in a morning; and, swifter than a pedlar can transmute his pack, you are at Canterbury with your prose ware before night.

"Sir, is it that I dislike you in this merry vein? The reverse. No countenance becomes an intelligent jest better than your own. It is your grave aspect, when you look awful upon your poor friends, which I would deprecate.

"In more than one place, if I mistake not, you have been pleased to compliment me at the expense of my companions. I cannot accept your compliment at such a price. The upbraiding a man's poverty naturally makes him look about him, to see whether he be so poor indeed as he is presumed to be. You have put me upon counting my riches. Really, sir, I did not know I was so wealthy in the article of friendships. There is ——, and ——, whom you never heard of, but exemplary characters both, and excellent churchgoers; and N., mine and my father's friend for nearly half a century; and the enthusiast for Wordsworth's poetry, ——, a little tainted with Socinianism, it is to be feared, but constant in his attachments, and a capital critic; and ——, a sturdy old Athanasian, so that sets all to rights again; and W., the light, and warm-as-light hearted, Janus of the London; and the translator of Dante, still a curate, modest and amiable C.; and Allan C., the large-headed Scot; and P—r, candid and affectionate as his own poetry; and A—p, Coleridge's friend; and G—n, his more than friend; and Coleridge himself, the same to me still as in those old evenings

when we used to sit and speculate (do you remember them, sir?) at our old Salutation tavern, upon Pantisocracy and golden days to come on earth; and W——th (why, sir, I might drop my rent-roll here; such goodly farms and manors have I reckoned up already. In what possessions has not this last name alone estated me!—but I will go on)—and M., the noble-minded kinsman, by wedlock, of W——th; and H. C. R., unwearied in the offices of a friend; and Clarkson, almost above the narrowness of that relation, yet condescending not seldom heretofore from the labour of his world-embracing charity to bless my humble roof; and the galless and single-minded Dyer; and the high-minded associate of Cook, the veteran colonel, with his lusty heart still sending cartels of defiance to old Time; and, not least, W. A., the last and steadiest left to me of that little knot of whist-players that used to assemble weekly, for so many years, at the Queen's Gate (you remember them, sir?), and called Admiral Burney friend.

"I will come to the point at once. I believe you will not make many exceptions to my associates so far. But I have purposely omitted some intimacies, which I do not yet repent of having contracted, with two gentlemen, diametrically opposed to you in principles. You will understand me to allude to the authors of 'Rimini' and of the 'Table Talk.' And first, of the former.

"It is an error more particularly incident to persons of the correctest principles and habits, to seclude themselves from the rest of mankind as from another species, and form into knots and clubs. The best people, herding thus exclusively, are in danger of contracting a narrowness. Heat and cold, dryness and moisture, in the natural world, do not fly asunder, to split the globe into sectarian parts and separations; but mingling, as they best may, correct the malignity of any single predominance. The analogy holds, I suppose, in the moral world. If all the good people were to ship themselves off to Terra Incognita, what, in humanity's name, is to become of the refuse? If the persons whom I have chiefly in view have not pushed matters to this extremity yet, they carry them as far as they can go. Instead of mixing with the infidel and the freethinker—in the room of opening a negotiation, to try at least to find out at which gate the error entered—they huddle close together, in a weak fear of infection, like that pusillanimous underling in Spenser—

> 'This is the wandering wood, this Error's den;
> A monster vile, whom God and man does hate:
> Therefore, I reed, beware. Fly, fly, quoth then
> The fearful Dwarf.'

And, if they be writers in orthodox journals—addressing themselves only to the irritable passions of the unbeliever—they proceed in a safe system of strengthening the strong hands and confirming the valiant knees; of converting the already converted, and proselyting their own party. I am the more convinced of this from a passage in the very treatise which occasioned this letter. It is where, having recommended to the doubter the writings of Michaelis and Lardner, you ride triumphant over the necks of all infidels, skeptics, and dissenters, from this time to the world's end, upon the wheels of two unanswerable deductions. I do not hold it meet to set down, in a miscellaneous compilation like this, such religious words as you have thought fit to introduce into the pages of a petulant literary journal. I therefore beg leave to substitute *numerals*, and refer to the 'Quarterly Review' (for July) for filling of them up. 'Here,' say you, 'as in the history of 7, if these books are authentic, the events which they relate must be true; if they were written by 8, 9 is 10 and 11.' Your first deduction, if it means honestly, rests upon two identical propositions; though I suspect an unfairness in one of the terms, which this would not be quite the proper place for explicating. At all events, *you* have no cause to triumph; you have not been proving the premises, but refer for satisfaction therein to very long and laborious works, which may well employ the skeptic a twelvemonth or two to digest before he can possibly be ripe for your conclusion. When he has satisfied himself about the premises, he will concede to you the inference, I dare say, most readily. But your latter deduction, *viz.*, that because 8 has written a book concerning 9, therefore 10 and 11 was certainly his meaning, is one of the most extraordinary conclusions *per saltum* that I have had the good fortune to meet with. As far as 10 is verbally asserted in the writings, all sects must agree with you; but you cannot be ignorant of the many various ways in which the doctrine of the ******* has been understood, from a low figurative expression (with the Unitarians) up to the most mysterious actuality; in which highest sense alone you and your church take it. And for 11, and that there is *no other possible conclusion*—to hazard this in the face of so many thousands of Arians and Socinians, &c., who have drawn so opposite a one, is such a piece of theological hardihood as, I think, warrants me in concluding that, when you sit down to pen theology, you do not at all consider your opponents; but have in your eye, merely and exclusively, readers of the same way of thinking with yourself, and therefore have no occasion to trouble yourself with the quality of the logic to which you treat them.

"Neither can I think, if you had had the welfare of the poor child—over whose hopeless condition you whine so lamentably and (I must think) unseasonably—seriously at heart, that you could have taken the step of sticking him up *by name* —T. H. is as good as *naming* him—to perpetuate an outrage upon the parental feelings, as long as the 'Quarterly Review' shall last. Was it necessary to specify an individual case, and give to Christian compassion the appearance of personal attack? Is this the way to conciliate unbelievers, or not, rather, to widen the breach irreparably?

"I own I could never think so considerably of myself as to decline the society of an agreeable or worthy man upon difference of opinion only. The impediments and the facilitations to a sound belief are various and inscrutable as the heart of man. (Some believe upon weak principles. Others cannot feel the efficacy of the strongest.) One of the most candid, most upright, and single-meaning men I ever knew, was the late Thomas Holcroft. I believe he never said one thing and meant another in his life; and, as near as I can guess, he never acted otherwise than with the most scrupulous attention to conscience. Ought we to wish the character false for the sake of a hollow compliment to Christianity?

"Accident introduced me to the acquaintance of Mr. L. H., and the experience of his many friendly qualities confirmed a friendship between us. You, who have been misrepresented yourself, I should hope have not lent an idle ear to the calumnies which have been spread abroad respecting this gentleman. I was admitted to his household for some years, and do most solemnly aver that I believe him to be in his domestic relations as correct as any man. He chose an ill-judged subject for a poem; the peccant humours of which have been visited on him tenfold by the artful use which his adversaries have made of an *equivocal term*. The subject itself was started by Dante, but better because brieffier treated of. But the crime of the lovers, in the Italian and the English poet, with its aggravated enormity of circumstance, is not of a kind (as the critics of the latter well knew) with those conjunctions, for which Nature herself has provided no excuse, because no temptation. It has nothing in common with the black horrors sung by Ford and Massinger. The familiarizing of it in tale or fable may be for that reason incidentally more contagious. In spite of Rimini, I must look upon its author as a man of taste and a poet. He is better than so; he is one of the most cordial-minded men I ever knew, and matchless as a fireside companion. I mean not to affront or wound your feelings when I say that, in his mere genial

moods, he has often reminded me of you. There is the same air of mild dogmatism—the same condescending to a boyish sportiveness—in both your conversations. His handwriting is so much the same with your own, that I have opened more than one letter of his, hoping, nay, not doubting, but it was from you, and have been disappointed (he will bear with my saying so) at the discovery of my error. L. H. is unfortunate in holding some loose and not very definite speculations (for, at times, I think he hardly knows whither his premises would carry him) on marriage—the tenets, I conceive, of the 'Political Justice' carried a little further. For anything I could discover in his practice, they have reference, like those, to some future possible condition of society, and not to the present times. But neither for these obliquities of thinking (upon which my own conclusions are as distant as the poles asunder), nor for his political asperities and petulances, which are wearing out with the heats and vanities of youth—did I select him for a friend; but for qualities which fitted him for that relation. I do not know whether I flatter myself with being the occasion, but certain it is, that, touched with some misgivings for sundry harsh things which he had written aforetime against our friend C., before he left this country he sought a reconciliation with that gentleman (himself being his own introducer), and found it.

"L. H. is now in Italy; on his departure to which land with much regret I took my leave of him and of his little family—seven of them, sir, with their mother—and as kind a set of little people (T. H. and all), as affectionate children as ever blessed a parent. Had you seen them, sir, I think you could not have looked upon them as so many little Jonases—but rather as pledges of the vessel's safety, that was to bear such a freight of love.

"I wish you would read Mr. H.'s lines to that same T. H. 'six years old, during a sickness:'—

> 'Sleep breaks at last from out thee,
> My little patient boy'—

(they are to be found in the 47th page of 'Foliage')—and ask yourself how far they are out of the spirit of Christianity. I have a letter from Italy, received but the other day, into which L. H. has put as much as heart, and as many friendly yearnings after old associates and native country as, I think, paper can well hold. It would do you no hurt to give that the perusal also.

"From the *other gentleman* I neither expect nor desire (as he is well assured) any such concessions as L. H. made to C.

What hath soured him, and made him to suspect his friends of infidelity towards him, when there was no such matter, I know not. I stood well with him for fifteen years (the proudest of my life), and have ever spoken my full mind of him to some, to whom his panegyric must naturally be least tasteful. I never in thought swerved from him, I never betrayed him, I never slackened in my admiration of him; I was the same to him (neither better nor worse), though he could not see it, as in the days when he thought fit to trust me. At this instant he may be preparing for me some compliment above my deserts, as he sprinkled many such among his admirable books, for which I rest his debtor; or, for anything I know or can guess to the contrary, he may be about to read a lecture on my weaknesses. He is welcome to them (as he was to my humble hearth), if they can divert a spleen or ventilate a fit of sullenness. I wish he would not quarrel with the world at the rate he does; but the reconciliation must be effected by himself, and I despair of living to see that day. But, protesting against much that he has written, and some things which he chooses to do; judging him by his conversation which I enjoyed so long and relished so deeply; or by his books, in those places where no clouding passion intervenes —I should belie my own conscience if I said less than that I think W. H. to be, in his natural and healthy state, one of the wisest and finest spirits breathing. So far from being ashamed of that intimacy which was betwixt us, it is my boast that I was able for so many years to have preserved it entire; and I think I shall go to my grave without finding, or expecting to find, such another companion. But I forget my manners— you will pardon me, sir—I return to the correspondence.

"Sir, you were pleased (you know where) to invite me to a compliance with the wholesome forms and doctrines of the Church of England. I take your advice with as much kindness as it was meant. But I must think the invitation rather more kind than seasonable. I am a Dissenter. The last sect with which you can remember me to have made common profession were the Unitarians. You would not think it very pertinent if (fearing that was not all well with you) I were gravely to invite you (for a remedy) to attend with me a course of Mr. Belsham's Lectures at Hackney. Perhaps I have scruples to some of your forms and doctrines. But, if I come, am I secure of civil treatment? The last time I was in any of your places of worship was on Easter Sunday last. I had the satisfaction of listening to a very sensible sermon of an argumentative turn, delivered with great propriety by one of your bishops. The place was Westminster Abbey. As such religion

as I have has always acted on me more by way of sentiment than argumentative process, I was not unwilling, after sermon ended, by no unbecoming transition, to pass over to some serious feelings, impossible to be disconnected from the sight of those old tombs, &c. But, by whose order I know not, I was debarred that privilege even for so short a space as a few minutes; and turned, like a dog or some profane person, out into the common street; with feelings which I could not help, but not very congenial to the day or the discourse. I do not know that I shall ever venture myself again into one of your churches.

"You had your education at Westminster; and, doubtless, among those dim aisles and cloisters you must have gathered much of that devotional feeling in those young years on which your purest mind feeds still—and may it feed! The antiquarian spirit, strong in you, and gracefully blending ever with the religious, may have been sown in you among those wrecks of splendid mortality. You owe it to the place of your education; you owe it to your learned fondness for the architecture of your ancestors; you owe it to the venerableness of your ecclesiastical establishment, which is daily lessened and called in question through these practices, to speak aloud your sense of them; never to desist raising your voice against them till they be totally done away with and abolished; till the doors of Westminster Abbey be no longer against the decent, though low-in-purse enthusiast or blameless devotee, who must commit an injury against his family economy, if he would be indulged with a bare admission within its walls. You owe it to the decencies which you wish to see maintained in its impressive services, that our cathedral be no longer an object of inspection to the poor at those times only, in which they must rob from their attendance on the worship every minute which they can bestow upon the fabric. In vain the public prints have taken up this subject, in vain such poor nameless writers as myself express their indignation. A word from you, sir—a hint in your journal—would be sufficient to fling open the doors of the beautiful temple again, as we can remember them when we were boys. At that time of life, what would the imaginative faculty (such as it is) in both of us have suffered if the entrance to so much reflection had been obstructed by the demand of so much silver! If we had scraped it up to gain an occasional admission (as we certainly should have done), would the sight of those old tombs have been as impressive to us (while we had been weighing anxiously prudence against sentiment) as when the gates stood open, as those of the adjacent park; when we could walk in

at any time, as the mood brought us, for a shorter or longer time, as *that* lasted? Is the being shown over a place the same as silently for ourselves detecting the genius of it? In no part of our beloved Abbey now can a person find entrance (out of service time) under the sum of *two shillings*. The rich and the great will smile at the anti-climax presumed to lie in these two short words. But you can tell them, sir, how much quiet worth, how much capacity for enlarged feeling, how much taste and genius, may coexist, especially in youth, with a purse incompetent to this demand. A respected friend of ours, during his late visit to the metropolis, presented himself for admission to Saint Paul's. At the same time a decently-clothed man, with as decent a wife and child, were bargaining for the same indulgence. The price was only twopence each person. The poor but decent man hesitated, desirous to go in: but there were three of them, and he turned away reluctantly. Perhaps he wished to have seen the tomb of Nelson. Perhaps the interior of the cathedral was his object. But in the state of his finances, even sixpence might reasonably seem too much. Tell the aristocracy of the country (no man can do it more impressively); instruct them of what value these insignificant pieces of money, these minims to their sight, may be to their humbler brethren. Shame these sellers out of the Temple! Show the poor that you can sometimes think of them in some other light than as mutineers and malecontents. Conciliate them by such kind methods to their superiors, civil and ecclesiastical. Stop the mouths of the railers; and suffer your old friends, upon the old terms, again to honour and admire you. Stifle not the suggestions of your better nature with the stale evasion that an indiscriminate admission would expose the tombs to violation. Remember your boy-days. Did you ever see or hear of a mob in the Abbey while it was free to all? Do the rabble come there, or trouble their heads about such speculations? It is all that you can do to drive them into your churches; they do not voluntarily offer themselves. They have, alas! no passion for antiquities; for tomb of king or prelate, sage or poet. If they had, they would no longer be the rabble.

"For forty years that I have known the fabric, the only well-attested charge of violation adduced has been—a ridiculous dismemberment committed upon the effigy of that amiable spy, Major André. And is it for this—the wanton mischief of some schoolboy, fired, perhaps, with raw notions of transatlantic freedom—or the remote possibility of such a mischief occurring again, so easily to be prevented by stationing a constable within the walls, if the vergers are incompetent to

the duty—is it upon such wretched pretences that the people of England are made to pay a new Peter's pence, so long abrogated; or must content themselves with contemplating the ragged exterior of their cathedral? The mischief was done about the time that you were a scholar there. Do you know anything about the unfortunate relic? can you help us in this emergency to find the nose? or can you give Chantrey a notion (from memory) of its pristine life and vigour? I am willing, for peace' sake, to subscribe a guinea towards a restoration of the lamented feature.

"I am, sir,

"Your humble servant,

"ELIA."

The feeling with which this letter was received by Southey may be best described in his own words in a letter to the publisher. "On my part there was not even a momentary feeling of anger; I was very much surprised and grieved, because I knew how much he would condemn himself. And yet no resentful letter was ever written less offensively: his gentle nature may be seen in it throughout." Southey was right in his belief in the revulsion Lamb's feelings would undergo when the excitement under which he had written subsided; for, although he would retract nothing he had ever said or written in defence of his friends, he was ready at once to surrender every resentment of his own. Southey came to London in the following month, and wrote proposing to call at Islington; and 21st November Lamb thus replied:—

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

"E. I. H., 21st November, 1823.

"Dear Southey—The kindness of your note has melted away the mist which was upon me. I have been fighting against a shadow. That accursed Q. R. had vexed me by a gratuitous speaking, of its own knowledge, that the 'Confessions of a D——d' was a genuine description of the state of the writer. Little things, that are not ill meant, may produce much ill. *That* might have injured me alive and dead. I am in a public office, and my life is ensured. I was prepared for anger, and I thought I saw, in a few obnoxious words, a hard case of repetition directed against me. I wish both magazine and review at the bottom of the sea. I shall be ashamed to see you, and my sister (though innocent) will be still more so; for the folly was done without her knowledge, and has made her uneasy ever since. My guardian angel was absent at that time.

"I will muster up courage to see you, however, any day next week (Wednesday excepted). We shall hope that you will bring Edith with you. That will be a second mortification. She will hate to see us, but come and heap embers. We deserve it, I for what I've done, and she for being my sister.

"Do come early in the day, by sunlight, that you may see my *Milton*.

"I am at Colebrook cottage, Colebrook Row, Islington. A detached whitish house, close to the New River, end of Colebrook Terrace, left hand coming from Sadler's Wells.

"Will you let me know the day before?

"Your penitent,

"C. LAMB.

"P.S. I do not think your handwriting at all like ****'s. I do not think many things I did think."

In the following letter of the same date Lamb anticipates the meeting.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"Dear B. B.—I am ashamed at not acknowledging your kind little poem, which I must needs like much; but I protest I thought I had done it at the moment. Is it possible a letter has miscarried? Did you get one in which I sent you an extract from the poems of Lord Sterling? I should wonder if you did, for I sent you none such. There was an incipient lie strangled in the birth. Some people's conscience is so tender! But, in plain truth, I thank you very much for the verses. I have a very kind letter from the laureate, with a self-invitation to come and shake hands with me. This is truly handsome and noble. 'Tis worthy of my old ideas of Southey. Shall not I, think you, be covered with a red suffusion?

"You are too much apprehensive of your complaint: I know many that are always ailing of it, and live on to a good old age. I know a merry fellow (you partly know him) who, when his medical adviser told him he had drunk away all *that part*, congratulated himself (now his liver was gone) that he should be the longest liver of the two.

"The best way in these cases is to keep yourself as ignorant as you can, as ignorant as the world was before Galen, of the entire inner constructions of the animal man; not to be conscious of a midriff; to hold kidneys (save those of sheep and swine) to be an agreeable fiction; not to know whereabout the gall grows; to account the circulation of the blood a mere idle whim of Harvey's; to acknowledge no mechanism

not visible; for, once fix the seat of your disorder, and your fancies flux into it like so many bad humours. Those medical gentry choose each his favourite part; one takes the lungs, another the aforesaid liver, and refers to that whatever in the animal economy is amiss. Above all, use exercise, take a little more spirituous liquors, learn to smoke, continue to keep a good conscience, and avoid tamperings with hard terms of art—viscosity, scirrhosity, and those bugbears by which simple patients are scared into their graves. Believe the general sense of the mercantile world, which holds that desks are not deadly. It is the mind, good B. B., and not the limbs, that taints by long sitting. Think of the patience of tailors, think how long the lord chancellor sits, think of the brooding hen! I protest I cannot answer thy sister's kind inquiry; but I judge I shall put forth no second volume. More praise than buy; and T. and H. are not particularly disposed for martyrs. Thou wilt see a funny passage, and yet a true history, of George Dyer's aquatic incursion in the next 'London.' Beware his fate when thou comest to see me at my Colebrook cottage. I have filled my little space with my little thoughts. I wish thee ease on thy sofa, but not too much indulgence on it. From my poor desk, thy fellow-sufferer, this bright November,

"C. L."

Southey went to Colebrook cottage as proposed; the awkwardness of meeting went off in a moment; and the affectionate intimacy, which had lasted for almost twenty years, was renewed, to be interrupted only by death.

CHAPTER XIX.

[1823 to 1825.]

Letters to Ainsworth, Barton, and Coleridge.

Lamb was fond of visiting the universities in the summer vacation, and repeatedly spent his holyday month at Cambridge with his sister. On one of these occasions they met with a little girl who, being, in a manner, alone in the world, engaged their sympathies, and soon riveted their affections. Emma Isola was the daughter of Mr. Charles Isola, who had been one of the esquire bedells of the university; her grand-

father, Agostino Isola, had been compelled to fly from Milan because a friend took up an English book in his apartment which he had carelessly left in view. This good old man numbered among his pupils Gray the poet, Mr. Pitt, and, in his old age, Wordsworth, whom he instructed in the Italian language. His little granddaughter, at the time when she had the good fortune to win the regard of Mr. Lamb, had lost both her parents, and was spending her holydays with an aunt, who lived with a sister of Mr. Ayrton, at whose house Lamb generally played his evening rubber during his stay at Cambridge. The liking which both Lamb and his sister took for the little orphan led to their begging her of her aunt for the next holydays; their regard for her increased; she regularly spent the holydays with them till she left school, and afterward was adopted as a daughter, and lived generally with them until 1833, when she married Mr. Moxon. Lamb was fond of taking long walks in the country, and as Miss Lamb's strength was not always equal to these pedestrian excursions, she became his constant companion in walks which even extended "to the green fields of pleasant Hertfordshire."

About this time Lamb added to his list of friends Mr. Hood, the delightful humorist; Hone, lifted for a short time into political fame by the prosecution of his Parodies, and the signal energy and success of his defence, but now striving by unwearied researches, which were guided by a pure taste and an honest heart, to support a numerous family; and Ainsworth, then a youth, who has since acquired so splendid a reputation as the author of "Rookwood" and "Crichton." Mr. Ainsworth, then resident at Manchester, excited by an enthusiastic admiration of Elia, had sent him some books, for which he thus conveyed his thanks to his unseen friend.

TO MR. AINSWORTH.

"India House, Dec. 9, 1823.

"Dear Sir—I should have thanked you for your books and compliments sooner, but have been waiting for a revise to be sent, which does not come, though I returned the proof on the receipt of your letter. I have read Warner with great pleasure. What an elaborate piece of alliteration and antithesis! why, it must have been a labour far above the most difficult versification. There is a fine simile or picture of Semiramis arming to repel a siege. I do not mean to keep the book, for I suspect you are forming a curious collection, and I do not pretend to anything of the kind. I have not a black-letter book among mine, old Chaucer excepted, and am not bibliomanist enough to like black letter. It is painful to read;

therefore I must insist on returning it at opportunity, not from contumacy and reluctance to be obliged, but because it must suit you better than me. The loss of a present *from* should never exceed the gain of a present *to*. I hold this maxim infallible in the accepting line. I read your magazines with satisfaction. I thoroughly agree with you as to 'The German Faust,' as far as I can do justice to it from an English translation. 'Tis a disagreeable canting tale of seduction, which has nothing to do with the spirit of Faustus—curiosity. Was the dark secret to be explored to end in the seducing a weak girl, which might have been accomplished by earthly agency? When Marlow gives *his* Faustus a mistress, he flies him at Helen, flower of Greece, to be sure, and not at Miss Betsy or Miss Sally Thoughtless.

> 'Cut is the branch that bore the goodly fruit,
> And wither'd is Apollo's laurel tree:
> Faustus is dead.'

"What a noble natural transition from metaphor to plain speaking! as if the figurative had flagged in description of such a loss, and was reduced to tell the fact simply.

"I must now thank you for your very kind invitation. It is not out of prospect that I may see Manchester some day, and then I will avail myself of your kindness. But holydays are scarce things with me, and the laws of attendance are getting stronger and stronger at Leadenhall. But I shall bear it in mind. Meantime, something may (more probably) bring you to town, where I shall be happy to see you. I am always to be found (alas!) at my desk in the forepart of the day.

"I wonder why they do not send the revise. I leave late at office, and my abode lies out of the way, or I should have seen about it. If you are impatient, perhaps a line to the printer, directing him to send it me, at Accountant's Office, may answer. You will see by the scrawl that I only snatch a few minutes from intermitting business.

"Your obliged servant,

"C. LAMB.

"(If I had time I would go over this letter again, and dot all my i's.)"

To Ainsworth, still pressing him to visit Manchester, he sent the following reply.

TO MR. AINSWORTH.

"My dear Sir—You talk of months at a time, and I know not what inducements to visit Manchester, Heaven knows

how gratifying! but I have had my little month of 1823 already. It is all over; and, without incurring a disagreeable favour, I cannot so much as get a single holyday till the season returns with the next year. Even our half-hour's absences from office are set down in a book! Next year, if I can spare a day or two of it, I will come to Manchester, but I have reasons at home against longer absences.

"I am so ill just at present (an illness of my own procuring last night; who is perfect?) that nothing but your very great kindness could make me write. I will bear in mind the letter to W. W., and you shall have it quite in time, before the 12th.

"My aching and confused head warns me to leave off. With a muddled sense of gratefulness, which I shall apprehend more clearly to-morrow,

"I remain, your friend unseen,

"C. L.

"I. H., 29th.

"Will your occasions or inclination bring you to London? It will give me great pleasure to show you everything that Islington can boast, if you know the meaning of that Cockney sound. We have the New River! I am ashamed of this scrawl, but I beg you to accept it for the present. I am full of qualms.

'A fool at fifty is a fool indeed.'"

Bernard Barton still frequently wrote to him; and he did not withhold the wished-for reply even when letter-writing was a burden. The following gives a ludicrous account of his indisposition:—

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"Dear B. B.—Do you know what it is to succumb under an insurmountable day-mare—'a whoreson lethargy,' Falstaff calls it, an indisposition to do anything, or to be anything—a total deadness and distaste—a suspension of vitality—an indifference to locality—a numb, soporifical, good-for-nothingness—an ossification all over—an oysterlike insensibility to the passing events—a mind-stupor—a brawny defiance to the needles of a thrusting-in conscience? Did you ever have a very bad cold, with a total irresolution to submit to water-gruel processes? This has been for many weeks my lot and my excuse; my fingers drag heavily over this paper, and, to my thinking, it's three-and-twenty furlongs from hence to the end of this demi-sheet. I have not a thing to say; nothing is of more importance than another; I am flatter than a denial or a

pancake; emptier than Judge ——'s wig when the head is in it; duller than a country stage when the actors are off it; a cipher, an O! I acknowledge life at all only by an occasional convulsional cough, and a permanent phlegmatic pain in the chest. I am weary of the world, and the world is weary of me. My day is gone into twilight, and I don't think it worth the expense of candles. My wick hath a thief it, but I can't muster courage to snuff it. I inhale suffocation; I can't distinguish veal from mutton; nothing interests me. 'Tis twelve o'clock, and Thurtell is just now coming out upon the New Drop, Jack Ketch alertly tucking up his greasy sleeves to do the last office of mortality, yet cannot I elicit a groan or a moral reflection. If you told me the world would be at an end to-morrow, I should just say, 'will it?' I have not volition enough left to dot my i's, much less to comb my eyebrows; my eyes are set in my head; my brains are gone out to see a poor relation in Moorfields, and they did not say when they'd come back again; my scull is a Grub-street attic to let—not so much as a joint-stool left in it; my hand writes, not I, just as chickens run about a little when their heads are off. Oh for a vigorous fit of gout, of cholic, toothache—an earwig in my auditory, a fly in my visual organs; pain is life—the sharper, the more evidence of life; but this apathy, this death! Did you ever have an obstinate cold—a six or seven weeks' unintermitting chill and suspension of hope, fear, conscience, and everything? Yet do I try all I can to cure it; I try wine, and spirits, and smoking, and snuff in unsparing quantities, but they all only seem to make me worse instead of better. I sleep in a damp room, but it does me no good; I come home late o'nights, but do not find any visible amendment!

"It is just fifteen minutes after twelve; Thurtell is by this time a good way on his journey, baiting at Scorpion, perhaps; Ketch is bargaining for his cast coat and waistcoat; the Jew demurs at first at three half-crowns; but, on consideration that he may get somewhat by showing 'em in the town, finally closes.

"C. L."

Barton took this letter rather too seriously, and Lamb thus sought to remove his friendly anxieties.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"My dear Sir—That peevish letter of mine, which was meant to convey an apology for my incapacity to write, seems to have been taken by you in too serious a light; it was only my way of telling you I had a severe cold The fact is, I

have been insuperably dull and lethargic for many weeks, and cannot rise to the vigour of a letter, much less an essay. The 'London' must do without me for a time, for I have lost all interest about it; and, whether I shall recover it or not, I know not. I will bridle my pen another time, and not teaze and puzzle you with my oddities. I shall begin to feel a little more alive with the spring. Winter is to me (mild or harsh) always a great trial of the spirits. I am ashamed not to have noticed your tribute to Woolman, whom we both love so much. It is done in your good manner. Your friend Taylor called on me some time since, and seems a very amiable man. His last story is painfully fine. His book I 'like;' it is only too stuffed with scripture, too parsonish. The best thing in it is the boy's own story. When I say it is too full of scripture, I mean it is too full of *direct quotations:* no book can have too much of silent scripture in it; but the natural power of a story is diminished when the uppermost purpose of the writer seems to be to recommend something else. You know what Horace says of the *Deus intersit?* I am not able to explain myself—you must do it for me. My sister's part in the 'Leicester School' (about two thirds) was purely her own; as it was (to the same quantity) in the 'Shakspeare Tales' which bears my name. I wrote only the 'Witch Aunt;' the 'First going to Church;' and the final story about 'A little Indian girl' in a ship. Your account of my blackballing amused me. *I think, as Quakers, they did right.* There are many things in my little book hard to be understood. The more I think, the more I am vexed at having puzzled you with that letter; but I have been so out of letter-writing lately that it is a sore effort to sit down to it; and I felt in your debt, and sat down waywardly to pay you in bad money. Never mind my dulness; I am used to long intervals of it. The heavens seem brass to me; then again comes the refreshing shower—

'I have been merry once or twice ere now.'

"You said something about Mr. M—— in a late latter, which I believe I did not advert to. I shall be happy to show him my Milton (it is all the show things I have) at any time he will take the trouble of a jaunt to Islington. I do also hope to see Mr. Taylor there some day. Pray say so to both. Coleridge's book is in good part printed, but sticks a little for *more copy.* It bears an unsaleable title, 'Extracts from Bishop Leighton,' but I am confident there will be plenty of good notes in it. * * * * * * *

"Keep your good spirits up, dear B. B., mine will return: they are at present in abeyance; but I am rather lethargic

than miserable. I don't know but a good horsewhip would be more beneficial to me than physic. My head without aching will teach yours to ache. It is well I am getting to the conclusion. I will send a better letter when I am a better man. Let me thank you for your kind concern for me (which, I trust, will have reason soon to be dissipated,) and assure you that it gives me pleasure to hear from you.

"Yours truly,
"C. L."

The following sufficiently indicate the circumstances under which they were written:—

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"Febuary, 1824.

"My dear Sir—Your title of 'Poetic Vigils' arrides me much more than a volume of verse which has no meaning. The motto says nothing, but I cannot suggest a better. I do not like mottoes but when they are singularly felicitous; there is a foppery in them; they are unplain, unquakerish; they are good only where they flow from the title, and are a kind of justification of it. There is nothing about watchings or lucubrations in the one you suggest, no commentary on vigils. By-the-way, a wag would recommend you to the line of Pope,

'Sleepless himself—to give his readers sleep'—

I by no means wish it; but it may explain what I mean, that a neat motto is child of the title. I think 'Poetic Vigils' as short and sweet as can be desired; only have an eye on the proof, that the printer do not substitute *Virgils*, which would ill accord with your modesty of meaning. Your suggested motto is antique enough in spelling and modern enough in phrases—a good modern antique; but the matter of it is germain to the purpose, only supposing the title proposed a vindication of yourself from the presumption of authorship. The first title was liable to this objection—that if you were disposed to change it, and the bookseller insisted on its appearance in two tomes, how oddly it would sound, 'A Volume of Verse in two Volumes, Second Edition,' &c. You see this my wicked intention of curtailing this epistolet by the above device of large margin. But, in truth, the idea of letterizing has been oppressive to me of late, above what your candour gives me credit for. There is Southey, whom I ought to have thanked a fortnight ago for a present of the 'Church Book:' I have never had courage to buckle myself in earnest

even to acknowledge it; and yet I am accounted by some people a good man! How cheap that character is acquired! Pay your debts, don't borrow money, nor twist your kitten's neck off, nor disturb a congregation, &c., your business is done. I know things (for thoughts *are* things) of myself which would make every friend I have fly me as a plague patient. I once set a dog upon a crab's leg that was shoved out under a mass of seaweeds—a pretty little feeler! Oh! pah! how sick I am of that! And a lie, a mean one, I once told. I stink in the midst of respect. I am much hypt. The fact is, my head is heavy, but there is hope; or, if not, I am better than a poor shellfish; not morally, when I set the whelp upon it, but have more blood and spirits. Things may turn up, and I may creep again into a decent opinion of myself. Vanity will return with sunshine. Till when, pardon my neglects, and impute it to the wintry solstice.

"C. LAMB."

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"Dear B. B.—I am sure I cannot fill a letter, though I should disfurnish my scull to do it; but you expect something, and shall have a notelet. Is Sunday, not divinely speaking, but humanly and holydaisically, a blessing? Without its institution, would our rugged taskmasters have given us a leisure day, so often, think you, as once in a month? or, if it had not been instituted, might not they have given us every sixth day? Solve me this problem:—If we are to go three times a day to church, why has Sunday slipped into the notion of a *holyday?* A HOLY-day I grant it. The Puritans, I have read in Southey's book, knew the distinction. They made people observe Sunday rigorously, would not let a nursery-maid walk out in the fields with children for recreation on that day. But, *then* —they gave the people a holyday from all sorts of work every second Tuesday. This was giving to the two Cæsars that which was *his* respective. Wise, beautiful, thoughtful, generous legislators! Would Wilberforce give us our Tuesdays? No! he would turn the six days into sevenths,

> 'And those three smiling seasons of the year
> Into a Russian winter.'
>
> *Old Play.*

"I am sitting opposite a person who is making strange distortions with the gout, which is not unpleasant—to me at least. What is the reason we do not sympathize with pain short of some terrible surgical operation? Hazlitt, who boldly says all he feels, avows that he not only does not pity sick people, but he hates them. I obscurely recognise his mean-

ing. Pain is probably too selfish a consideration, too simply a consideration of self attention. We pity poverty, loss of friends, &c.—more complex things, in which the sufferer's feelings are associated with others. This is a rough thought, suggested by the presence of gout; I want head to extricate and plane it. What is all this to your letter? I felt it to be a good one; but my turn, when I write at all, is perversely to travel out of the record, so that my letters are anything but answers. So you still want a motto? You must not take my ironical one, because your book, I take it, is too serious for it. Bickerstaff might have used it for *his* lucubrations. What do you think of Religio-Tremuli? or Tremebundi? (for a title.) There is Religio-Medici and Religio-Laici. But perhaps the volume is not quite Quakerish enough, or exclusively so, for it. Your own 'Vigils' is perhaps the best. While I have space, let me congratulate you on the return of spring, what a summer spring too! all those qualms about the dog and crayfish melt before it. I am going to be happy and *vain* again.

"A hasty farewell.

"C. LAMB."

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"July 7th, 1824.

"Dear B. B.—I have been suffering under a severe inflammation of the eyes, notwithstanding which I resolutely went through your pretty volume at once, which I dare pronounce in no ways inferior to former lucubrations. 'Abroad' and 'lord' are vile rhymes notwithstanding; and, if you count, you will wonder how many times you have repeated the word *unearthly*; thrice in one poem. It is become a slang word with the bards; avoid in future lustily. 'Time' is fine, but there are better a good deal, I think. The volume does not lie by me; and, after a long day's smarting fatigue, which has almost put out my eyes (not blind, however, to your merits), I dare not trust myself with long writing. The verses to Bloomfield are the sweetest in the collection. Religion is sometimes lugged in, as if it did not come naturally. I will go over carefully when I get my seeing, and exemplify. You have also too much singing metre, such as requires no deep ear to make; lilting measure, in which you have done Woolman injustice. Strike at less superficial melodies. The piece on Naylor is more to my fancy.

"My eye runs waters. But I will give you a fuller account some day. The book is a very pretty one in more than

one sense. The decorative harp, perhaps, is too ostentatious; a simple pipe preferable.

"Farewell, and many thanks.

"C. LAMB."

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"August, 1824.

"Dear B. B.—The 'Prometheus' *unbound* is a capital story. The literary rogue! What if you had ordered 'Elfrida' in *sheets!* she'd have been sent up, I warrant you. Or bid him clasp his Bible (*i. e.*, to his bosom), he'd have clapped on a brass clasp, no doubt.

"I can no more understand Shelley than you can. His poetry is 'thin sown with profit or delight.' Yet I must point to your notice a poem conceived and expressed with a witty delicacy. It is that addressed to one who hated him, but who could not persuade him to hate *him* again. His coyness to the other's passion (for hatred demands a return as much as love, and starves without it) is most arch and pleasant. Pray like it very much. For his theories and nostrums, they are oracular enough, but I either comprehend 'em not, or there is 'miching malice' and mischief in 'em; but, for the most part, ringing with their own emptiness. Hazlitt said well of 'em—'Many are the wiser and better for reading Shakspeare, but nobody was ever wiser or better for reading Shelley.' I wonder you will sow your correspondence on so barren a ground as I am, that make such poor returns. But my head aches at the bare prospect of letter-writing. I wish all the ink in the ocean dried up, and would listen to the quills shivering up in the candle-flame like parching martyrs. The same indisposition to write has stopped my 'Elias,' but you will see a futile effort in the next number, 'wrung from me with slow pain.' I am dreadfully indolent. To have to do anything, to order a new coat, for instance, though my old buttons are shelled like beans, is an effort. My pen stammers like my tongue. What cool heads those old enditers of folios must have had! what a mortified pulse! Well; once more I throw myself on your mercy. Wishing peace to thy new dwelling,

"C. LAMB."

Mr. Barton, having requested of Lamb some verses for his daughter's album, received the following, with the accompanying letter beneath, on 30th November in this year. Surely the neat loveliness of female Quakerism never received before so delicate a compliment!

"THE ALBUM OF LUCY BARTON.

Little book, surnamed of *white*,
Clean as yet, and fair to sight,
Keep thy attribution right.

Never disproportion'd scrawl,
Ugly, old (that's worse than all),
On thy maiden clearness fall!

In each letter here design'd,
Let the reader emblem'd find
Neatness of the owner's mind.

Gilded margins count a sin;
Let thy leaves attraction win
By the golden rules within;

Sayings fetch'd from sages old;
Laws which Holy Writ unfold,
Worthy to be graved in gold:

Lighter fancies; not excluding
Blameless wit, with nothing rude in,
Sometimes mildly interluding

Amid strains of graver measure:
Virtue's self hath oft her pleasure
In sweet Muses' groves of leisure.

Riddles dark, perplexing sense;
Darker meanings of offence;
What but *shades*—be banish'd hence!

Whitest thoughts, in whitest dress,
Candid meanings best express
Mind of quiet Quakeress."

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"Dear B. B.—'I am ill at these numbers;' but, if the above be not too mean to have a place in thy daughter's sanctum, take them with pleasure.

"I began on another sheet of paper; and, just as I had penned the second line of stanza two, an ugly blot fell to illustrate my counsel. I am sadly given to blot, and modern blotting-paper gives no redress; it only smears, and makes it worse. The only remedy is scratching out, which gives it a clerkish look. The most innocent blots are made with red ink, and are rather ornamental. Marry, they are not always to be distinguished from the effusions of a cut finger! Well, I hope and trust thy *tick doleru*, or however you spell it, is vanished, for I have frightful impressions of that tick, and do altogether hate it as an unpaid score or the tick of a death watch. I take it to be a species of Vitus's dance (I omit the sanctity, writing to one of the men called friends). I knew a

young lady who could dance no other; she danced it through life, and very queer and fantastic were her steps.

"Heaven bless thee from such measures, and keep thee from the foul fiend, who delights to lead after false fires in the night, Flibbertigibbet, that gives the web, and I forget what else.

"From my den, as Bunyan has it.

"C. L."

Here is a humorous expostulation with Coleridge for carrying away a book from the cottage in the absence of its inmates.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"Dear C.—Why will you make your visits, which should give pleasure, matter of regret to your friends? You never come but you take away some folio that is part of my existence. With a great deal of difficulty I was made to comprehend the extent of my loss. My maid, Becky, brought me a dirty bit of paper, which contained her description of some book which Mr. Coleridge had taken away. It was 'Luster's Tables,' which, for some time, I could not make out. 'What! has he carried away any of the *tables*, Becky?' 'No, it wasn't any tables, but it was a book that he called Luster's Tables.' I was obliged to search personally among my shelves, and a huge fissure suddenly disclosed to me the true nature of the damage I had sustained. That book, C., you should not have taken away, for it is not mine; it is the property of a friend, who does not know its value, nor, indeed, have I been very sedulous in explaining to him the estimate of it; but was rather contented in giving a sort of corroboration to a hint that he let fall, as to its being suspected to be not genuine; so that, in all probability, it would have fallen to me as a deodand; not but I am as sure it is Luther's as I am sure that Jack Bunyan wrote the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' but it was not for me to pronounce upon the validity of testimony that had been disputed by learneder clerks than I; so I quietly let it occupy the place it had usurped upon my shelves, and should never have thought of issuing an ejectment against it; for why should I be so bigoted as to allow rites of hospitality to none but my own books, children, &c.? a species of egotism I abhor from my heart. No; let 'em all snug together, Hebrews and Proselytes of the gate; no selfish partiality of mine shall make distinction between them; I charge no warehouse-room for my friends' commodities; they are welcome to come and stay as long as they like without paying rent. I have several such

strangers that I treat with more than Arabian courtesy; there's a copy of More's fine poem, which is none of mine, but I cherish it as my own; I am none of those churlish landlords that advertise the goods to be taken away in ten days' time, or then to be sold to pay expenses. So you see I had no right to lend you that book; I may lend you my own books, because it is at my own hazard, but it is not honest to hazard a friend's property; I always make that distinction. I hope you will bring it with you, or send it by Hartley; or he can bring that, and you the 'Polemical Discourses,' and come and eat some atoning mutton with us one of these days shortly. We are engaged two or three Sundays deep, but always dine at home on week-days at half past four. So come all four—men and books, I mean—my third shelf (northern compartment) from the top has two devilish gaps, where you have knocked out its two eye-teeth.

"Your wronged friend,

"C. LAMB."

The following preface to a letter, addressed to Miss Hutchinson, Mrs. Wordsworth's sister, playing on the pretended defects of Miss Lamb's handwriting, is one of those artifices of affection which, not finding scope in eulogistic epithets, takes refuge in apparent abuse. Lamb himself, at this time, wrote a singularly neat hand, having greatly improved in the India House, where he also learned to flourish—a facility he took a pride in, and sometimes indulged; but his flourishes (wherefore it would be too curious to inquire) almost always shaped themselves into a visionary corkscrew, 'never made to draw.'

TO MISS HUTCHINSON.

"Dear Miss H.—Mary has such an invincible reluctance to any epistolary exertion, that I am sparing her a mortification by taking the pen from her. The plain truth is, she writes such a pimping, mean, detestable hand, that she is ashamed of the formation of her letters. There is an essential poverty and abjectness in the frame of them. They look like begging letters. And then she is sure to omit a most substantial word in the second draught (for she never ventures an epistle without a foul copy first), which is obliged to be interlined; which spoils the neatest epistle, you know. Her figures, 1, 2, 3, 4, &c., where she has occasion to express numerals, as in the date [25th March, 1824], are not figures, but figurantes; and the combined posse go staggering up and down shameless as drunkards in the daytime. It is no better when she rules her paper. Her lines 'are not less er-

ring' than her words. A sort of unnatural parallel lines, that are perpetually threatening to meet; which, you know, is quite contrary to Euclid. Her very blots are not bold like this [here a large blot is inserted], but poor smears, half left in and half scratched out, with another smear left in their place. I like a clear letter. A bold free hand and a fearless flourish. Then she has always to go through them (a second operation) to dot her *i*'s and cross her *t*'s. I don't think she can make a corkscrew if she tried, which has such a fine effect at the end or middle of an epistle, and fills up.

"There is a corkscrew! One of the best I ever drew. By-the-way, what incomparable whiskey that was of M.'s! But, if I am to write a letter, let me begin, and not stand flourishing like a fencer at a fair.

"It gives me great pleasure," &c., &c., &c.

[The letter now begins.]

What a strange mingling of humour and solemn truth is there in the following reflection on Fauntleroy's fate, in a letter addressed to Bernard Barton!

TO BERNARD BARTON.

* * * * * *

"And now, my dear sir, trifling apart, the gloomy catastrophe of yesterday morning prompts a sadder vein. The fate of the unfortunate Fauntleroy makes me, whether I will or no, to cast reflecting eyes around on such of my friends as, by a parity of situation, are exposed to a similarity of temptation. My very style seems to myself to become more impressive than usual with the charge of them. Who that standeth knoweth but he may yet fall? Your hands as yet, I am most willing to believe, have never deviated into other's property. You think it impossible that you could ever commit so heinous an offence; but so thought Fauntleroy once; so have thought many besides him, who at last have expiated as he hath done. You are as yet upright; but you are a banker, or, at least, the next thing to it. I feel the delicacy of the subject; but cash must pass through your hands, sometimes to a great amount. If in an unguarded hour—but I will hope better. Consider the scandal it will bring upon those of your persuasion. Thousands would go to see a Quaker hanged that would be indifferent to the fate of a Presbyterian or an Anabaptist. Think of the effect it would have on the sale of your poems alone, not to mention higher considerations! I tremble, I am sure, at myself, when I think that so many poor victims of the law, at one time of their life,

made as sure of never being hanged as I, in my own presumption, am ready, too ready, to do myself. What are we better than they? Do we come into the world with different necks? Is there any distinctive mark under our left ears? Are we unstrangulable, I ask you? Think on these things. I am shocked sometimes at the shape of my own fingers, not for their resemblance to the ape tribe (which is something), but for the exquisite adaptation of them to the purposes of picking, fingering, &c.

"No one that is so framed, I maintain it, but should tremble. C. L."

In the year 1824 one of Lamb's last ties to the theatre, as a scene of present enjoyment, was severed. Munden, the rich peculiarities of whose acting he has embalmed in one of the choicest "Essays of Elia," left the stage in the mellowness of his powers. His relish for Munden's acting was almost a new sense; he did not compare him with the old comedians, as having common qualities with them, but regarded him as altogether of a different and original style. On the last night of his appearance Lamb was very desirous to attend, but every place in the boxes had long been secured; and Lamb was not strong enough to stand the tremendous rush, by enduring which, alone, he could hope to obtain a place in the pit; when Munden's gratitude for his exquisite praise anticipated his wish, by providing for him and Miss Lamb places in a corner of the orchestra, close to the stage. The play of the "Poor Gentleman," in which Munden played "Sir Robert Bramble," had concluded, and the audience were impatiently waiting for the farce, in which the great comedian was to delight them for the last time, when my attention was suddenly called to Lamb by Miss Kelly, who sat with my party far withdrawn into the obscurity of one of the upper boxes, but overlooking the radiant hollow which waved below us, to our friend. In his hand, directly beneath the line of stage lights, glistened a huge porter pot, which he was draining; while the broad face of old Munden was seen thrust out from the door by which the musicians enter, watching the close of the draught, when he might receive and hide the portentous beaker from the gaze of the admiring neighbours. Some unknown benefactor had sent four pots of stout to keep up the veteran's heart during his last trial; and, not able to drink them all, he bethought him of Lamb; and without considering the wonder which would be excited in the brilliant crowd who surrounded him, conveyed himself the cordial chalice to Lamb's parched lips. At the end of the same farce Munden found himself unable

to deliver, from memory, a short and elegant address which one of his sons had written for him; but, provided against accidents, took it from his pocket, wiped his eyes, put on his spectacles, read it, and made his last bow. This was, perhaps, the last night when Lamb took a hearty interest in the present business scene; for though he went now and then to the theatre to gratify Miss Isola, or to please an author who was his friend, his real stage henceforth only spread itself out in the selectest chambers of his memory.

CHAPTER XV.

[1825.]

Lamb's Emancipation from the India House.

THE year 1825 is marked by one of the principal events in Lamb's uneventful life—his retirement from the drudgery of the desk, with a pension equal to two thirds of his now liberal salary. The following letters vividly exhibit his hopes and his apprehensions before he received this noble boon from the East India Company, and his bewilderment of pleasure when he found himself in reality free. He has recorded his feelings in one of the most beautiful of his "Last Essays of Elia," entitled "The Superannuated Man;" but it will be interesting to contemplate them, "living as they rose," in the unstudied letters to which this chapter is devoted.

A new series of the London Magazine was commenced with this year, in an increased size and price; but the spirit of the work had evaporated, as often happens to periodical works, as the store of rich fancies with which its contributors had begun was in a measure exhausted. Lamb contributed a "Memoir of Liston," who occasionally enlivened Lamb's evening parties with his society; and who, besides the interest which he derived from his theatrical fame, was recommended to Lamb by the cordial admiration he expressed for Munden, whom he used to imitate in a style delightfully blending his own humour with that of his some time rival. The "Memoir" is altogether a fiction—of which, as Lamb did not think it worthy of republication, I will only give a specimen. After a ludicrously improbable account of his hero's pedigree, birth, and early habits, Lamb thus represents his entrance on the life of an actor.

"We accordingly find him shortly after making his *début*, as it is called, upon the Norwich boards, in the season of that year, being then in the twenty-second year of his age. Having a natural bent to tragedy, he chose the part of 'Pyrrhus' in the 'Distressed Mother,' to Sally Parker's 'Hermione.' We find him afterward as 'Barnwell,' 'Altamont,' 'Chamont,' &c.; but, as if nature had destined him to the sock, an unavoidable infirmity absolutely discapacitated him for tragedy. His person, at this latter period of which I have been speaking, was graceful, and even commanding; his countenance set to gravity; he had the power of arresting the attention of an audience at first sight almost beyond any other tragic actor. But he could not hold it. To understand this obstacle, we must go back a few years, to those appalling reveries at Charnwood. Those illusions, which had vanished before the dissipation of a less recluse life and more free society, now in his solitary tragic studies, and amid the intense calls upon feeling incident to tragic acting, came back upon him with tenfold vividness. In the midst of some most pathetic passage —the parting of Jaffier with his dying friend, for instance—he would suddenly be surprised with a violent fit of horse laughter. While the spectators were all sobbing before him with emotion, suddenly one of those grotesque faces would peep out upon him, and he could not resist the impulse. A timely excuse once or twice served his purpose, but no audiences could be expected to bear repeatedly this violation of the continuity of feeling. He describes them (the illusions) as so many demons haunting him, and paralyzing every effort. Even now, I am told, he cannot recite the famous soliloquy in Hamlet, even in private, without immoderate bursts of laughter. However, what he had not force of reason sufficient to overcome, he had good sense enough to turn to emolument, and determined to make a commodity of his distemper. He prudently exchanged the buskin for the sock, and the illusions instantly ceased; or, if they occurred for a short season, by their very co-operation added a zest to his comic vein; some of his most catching faces being (as he expresses it) little more than transcripts and copies of those extraordinary phantasmata."

He completed his half century on the day when he addressed the following letter

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"10th February, 1825.

"Dear B. B.—The 'Spirit of the Age' is by Hazlitt, the characters of Coleridge, &c., he had done better in former

publications, the praise and the abuse much stronger, &c., but the new ones are capitally done. Horne Tooke is a matchless portrait. My advice is, to borrow it rather than buy it. I have it; he has laid too many colours on my likeness; but I have had so much injustice done me in my own name, that I make a rule of accepting as much over-measure to Elia as gentlemen think proper to bestow. Lay it on, and spare not. Your gentleman brother sets my mouth a watering after liberty. Oh that I were kicked out of Leadenhall, with every mark of indignity, and a competence in my fob. The birds of the air would not be so free as I should. How I would prance and curvet it, and pick up cowslips, and ramble about purposeless as an infant! The author-nometer is a good fancy. I have caused great speculation in the dramatic (not thy) world by a lying 'Life of Liston,' all pure invention. The town has swallowed it, and it is copied into newspapers, playbills, &c., as authentic. You do not know the droll, and, probably, missed reading the article (in our first number, new series). A life more improbable for him to have lived could not be easily invented. But your rebuke, coupled with 'Dreams on J. Bunyan,' checks me. I'd rather do more in my favourite way, but feel dry. I must laugh sometimes. I am poor Hypochondriachus, and *not* Liston.

"I have been harassed more than usually at office, which has stopped my correspondence lately. I write with a confused aching head, and you must accept this apology for a letter.

"I will do something soon, if I can, *as a peace-offering to the queen of the East Angles*—something she shan't scold about.

"For the present, farewell.

"Thine, C. L."

Freedom now gleamed on him, and he became restless with the approach of deliverance.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"March, 1825.

"Dear B. B.—I have had no impulse to write, or attend to any single object but myself for weeks past—my single self, I by myself—I. I am sick of hope deferred. The grand wheel is in agitation that is to turn up my fortune; but round it rolls, and will turn up nothing. I have a glimpse of freedom, of becoming a gentleman at large; but I am put off from day to day. I have offered my resignation, and it is neither accepted nor rejected. Eight weeks am I kept in this fearful suspense. Guess what an absorbing state I feel it. I am

not conscious of the existence of friends present or absent. The East India Directors alone can be that thing to me or not. I have just learned that nothing will be decided this week. Why the next? Why any week? It has fretted me into an itch of the fingers; I rub 'em against paper, and write to you, rather than not allay this scorbuta.

"While I can write, let me abjure you to have no doubts of IRVING. Let Mr. M—— drop his disrespect. Irving has prefixed a dedication (of a missionary subject, first part) to Coleridge, the most beautiful, cordial, and sincere. He there acknowledges his obligation to S. T. C. for his knowledge of Gospel truths, the nature of a Christian Church, &c., to the talk of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (at whose Gamaliel feet he sits weekly) rather than to that of all the men living. This from him, the great dandled and petted sectarian—to a religious character so equivocal in the worlds eye as that of S. T. C., so foreign to the kirk's estimate—can this man be a quack? The language is as affecting as the spirit of the dedication. Some friend told him, 'This dedication will do you no good,' *i. e.*, not in the world's repute, or with your own people. 'That is a reason for doing it,' quoth Irving.

"I am thoroughly pleased with him. He is firm, outspeaking, intrepid, and docile as a pupil of Pythagoras. You must like him.

"Yours, in tremours of painful hope,

"C. LAMB."

These tremours of painful hope were soon changed into certain joy. The following letters contain his own expressions of delight on his deliverance, as conveyed to several of his dearest friends. In the first his happiness is a little checked by the death of Mr. Monkhouse, a relation of Mrs. Wordsworth, who had gradually won Lamb's affections, and who nobly deserved them.

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

"Colebrook Cottage, 6th April, 1825.

"Dear Wordsworth—I have been several times meditating a letter to you concerning the good thing which has befallen me, but the thought of poor Monkhouse came across me. He was one that I had exulted in the prospect of congratulating me. He and you were to have been the first participators, for, indeed, it has been ten weeks since the first motion of it. Here am I, then, after thirty-three years' slavery, sitting in my own room at eleven o'clock this finest of all April mornings, a freed man, with 441*l.* a year for the remainder of my life,

live I as long as John Dennis, who outlived his annuity and starved at ninety: 441*l.*, *i. e.*, 450*l.*, with a deduction of 9*l.* for a provision secured to my sister, she being surviver, the pension guaranteed by Act Georgii Tertii, &c.

"I came home FOR EVER on Tuesday in last week. The incomprehensibleness of my condition overwhelmed me. It was like passing from life into eternity. Every year to be as long as three, *i. e.*, to have three times as much real time—time that is my own, in it! I wandered about thinking I was happy, but feeling I was not. But that tumultuousness is passing off, and I begin to understand the nature of the gift. Holydays, even the annual month, were always uneasy joys with their conscious fugitiveness; the craving after making the most of them. Now, when all is holyday, there are no holydays. I can sit at home, in rain or shine, without a restless impulse for walkings. I am daily steadying, and shall soon find it as natural to me to be my own master as it has been irksome to have had a master. Mary wakes every morning with an obscure feeling that some good has happened to us.

"—— and ——, after their releasements, describe the shock of their emancipation much as I feel mine. But it hurt their frames. I eat, drink, and sleep sound as ever. I lay no anxious schemes for going hither and thither, but take things as they occur. Yesterday I excursioned twenty miles; to-day I write a few letters. Pleasuring was for fugitive playdays, mine are fugitive only in the sense that life is fugitive. Freedom and life coexistent!

"At the foot of such a call upon you for gratulation, I am ashamed to advert to that melancholy event. Monkhouse was a character I learned to love slowly, but it grew upon me, yearly, monthly, daily. What a chasm has it made in our pleasant parties! His noble friendly face was always coming before me, till this hurrying event in my life came, and, for the time, has absorbed all interest; in fact, it has shaken me a little. My old desk companions, with whom I have had such merry hours, seem to reproach me for removing my lot from among them. They were pleasant creatures; but to the anxieties of business, and a weight of possible worse ever impending, I was not equal. Indeed, this last winter I was jaded out—winters were always worse than other parts of the year, because the spirits are worse, and I had no daylight. In summer I had daylight evenings. The relief was hinted to me from a superior power when I, poor slave, had not a hope but that I must wait another seven years with Jacob—and lo! the Rachel which I coveted is brought to me.

"Have you read the noble dedication of Irving's 'Mission-

ary Orations' to S. T. C.? Who shall call this man a quack hereafter? What the kirk will think of it neither I nor Irving care. When somebody suggested to him that it would not be likely to do him good, videlicet, among his own people, 'That is a reason for doing it,' was his noble answer. That Irving thinks he has profited mainly by S. T. C., I have no doubt. The very style of the dedication shows it.

"Communicate my news to Southey, and beg his pardon for my being so long acknowledging his kind present of the 'Church,' which circumstances, having no reference to himself, prevented at the time. Assure him of my deep respect and friendliest feelings.

"Divide the same, or rather each take the whole to you—I mean you and all yours. To Miss Hutchinson I must write separate.

"Farewell! and end at last, long selfish letter!

"C. LAMB."

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"Dear B. B.—My spirits are so tumultuary with the novelty of my recent emancipation, that I have scarce steadiness of hand, much more mind, to compose a letter. I am free, B. B.—free as air!

'The little bird that wings the sky
Knows no such liberty.'

I was set free on Tuesday in last week at four o'clock. I came home for ever!

"I have been describing my feelings as well as I can to Wordsworth in a long letter, and don't care to repeat. Take it briefly, that for a few days I was painfully oppressed by so mighty a change, but it is becoming daily more natural to me. I went and sat among 'em all at my old thirty-three-years' desk yester morning; and, deuse take me, if I had not yearnings at leaving all my old pen-and-ink fellows, merry, sociable lads, at leaving them in the lurch, fag, fag, fag! The comparison of my own superior felicity gave me anything but pleasure.

"B. B., I would not serve another seven years for seven hundred thousand pounds! I have got 440*l.* nett for life, sanctioned by act of parliament, with a provision for Mary if she survives me. I will live another fifty years; or, if I live but ten, they will be thirty, reckoning the quantity of real time in them, *i. e.*, the time that is a man's own. Tell me how you like 'Barbara S.;'* will it be received in atonement

* The true heroine of this beautiful story is still living, though she has left

for the foolish 'Vision'—I mean by the lady? *Apropos*, I never saw Mrs. Crawford in my life; nevertheless, it's all true of somebody.

"Address me, in future, Colebrooke cottage, Islington. I am really nervous (but that will wear off), so take this brief announcement.

"Yours, truly, C. L."

TO MISS HUTCHINSON.

"Dear Miss Hutchinson—You want to know all about my jail delivery. Take it, then. About twelve weeks since I had a sort of intimation that a resignation might be well accepted from me. This was a kind bird's whisper. On that hint I spake. G—— and T—— furnished me with certificates of wasted health and sore spirits—not much more than the truth, I promise you—and for nine weeks I was kept in a fright. I had gone too far to recede, and they might take advantage, and dismiss me with a much less sum than I had reckoned on. However, liberty came at last, with a liberal provision. I have given up what I could have lived on in the country; but have enough to live here by management and scribbling occasionally. I would not go back to my prison for seven years longer for 10,000*l.* a year—seven years after one is fifty is no trifle to give up. Still I am a young *pensioner*, and have served but thirty-three years; very few, I assure you, retire before forty, forty-five, or fifty years' service.

"You will ask how I bear my freedom. Faith, for some days I was staggered; could not comprehend the magnitude of my deliverance; was confused, giddy; knew not whether I was on my head or my heel, as they say. But those giddy feelings have gone away, and my weather-glass stands at a degree or two above

CONTENT.

"I go about quiet, and have none of that restless hunting after recreation, which made holydays formerly uneasy joys. All being holydays, I feel as if I had none, as they do in heaven, where 'tis all red-letter days. I have a kind letter from the Wordsworths, *congratulatory* not a little. It is a damp, I do assure you, amid all my prospects, that I can receive *none* from a quarter upon which I had calculated, almost more than from any, upon receiving congratulations. I had grown to like poor Monkhouse more and more. I do not es-

the stage. It is enough to make a severer Quaker than B. B. feel "that there is some soul of goodness" in players.

teem a soul living or not living more warmly than I had grown to esteem and value him. But words are vain. We have none of us to count upon many years. That is the only cure for sad thoughts. If only some died, and the rest were permanent on earth, what a thing a friend's death would be then!

"I must take leave, having put off answering a load of letters to this morning, and this, alas! is the first. Our kindest remembrances to Mrs. Monkhouse,

"And believe us yours most truly,

"C. LAMB.

"18th April, 1825."

In this summer Lamb and his sister paid a long visit to Enfield, which induced their removing thither some time afterward. The following letter is addressed thence

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

"19th August, 1825.

"Dear Southey—You'll know who this letter comes from by opening slap dash upon the text, as in the good old times. I never could come into the custom of envelopes; 'tis a modern foppery; the Plinian correspondence gives no hint of such. In singleness of sheet and meaning, then, I thank you for your little book. I am ashamed to add a codicil of thanks for your 'Book of the Church.' I scarce feel competent to give an opinion of the latter; I have not read enough of that kind to venture at it. I can only say the fact, that I have read it with attention and interest. Being, as you know, not quite a churchman, I felt a jealousy at the Church taking to herself the whole deserts of Christianity, Catholic and Protestant, from Druid extirpation downward. (I call all good Christians the Church, Capillarians and all.) But I am in too light a humour to touch these matters. May all our churches flourish! Two things staggered me in the poem (and one of them staggered both of us). I cannot away with a beautiful series of verses, as I protest they are, commencing 'Jenner.' 'Tis like a choice banquet opened with a pill or an electuary—physic stuff. T'other is, we cannot make out how Edith should be no more than ten years old. By'r Lady, we had taken her to be some sixteen or upward. We suppose you have only chosen the round number for the metre. Or poem and dedication may be both older than they pretend to; but, then, some hint might have been given; for, as it stands, it may only serve some day to puzzle the parish reckoning. But, without inquiring further (for 'tis ungracious to look into a lady's years), the dedication is eminently pleasing and tender,

and we wish Edith May Southey joy of it. Something, too, struck us as if we had heard of the death of John May. A John May's death was a few years since in the papers. We think the tale one of the quietest, prettiest things we have seen. You have been temperate in the use of localities, which generally spoil poems laid in exotic regions. You mostly cannot stir out (in such things) for hummingbirds and fireflies. A tree is a magnolia, &c.

> 'Can I but like the truly Catholic spirit?
> Blame as thou mayst the papist's erring creed'—

which, and other passages, brought me back to the old Anthology days, and the admonitory lesson to 'Dear George' on 'The Vesper Bell,' a little poem which retains its first hold upon me strangely.

"The compliment to the translatress is daintily conceived. Nothing is choicer in that sort of writing than to bring in some remote, impossible parallel—as between a great empress and the inobtrusive quiet soul who digged her noiseless way so perseveringly through that rugged Paraguay mine. How she Dobrizhoffered it all out, it puzzles my slender Latinity to conjecture. Why do you seem to sanction Landor's allegorizing away of honest Quixote! He may as well say Strap is meant to symbolize the Scottish nation before the Union, and Random since that act of dubious issue; or that Partridge means the Mystical Man, and Lady Bellaston typifies the Woman upon Many Waters. Gebir, indeed, may mean the state of the hop-markets last month, for anything I know to the contrary. That all Spain overflowed with romancical books (as Madge Newcastle calls them) was no reason that Cervantes should not smile at the matter of them; nor even a reason that, in another mood, he might not multiply them, deeply as he was tinctured with the essence of them. Quixote is the father of gentle ridicule, and, at the same time, the very depository and treasury of chivalry and highest notions. Marry, when somebody persuaded Cervantes that he meant only fun, and put him upon writing that unfortunate second part, with the confederacies of that unworthy duke and most contemptible duchess, Cervantes sacrificed his instinct to his understanding.

"We got your little book but last night, being at Enfield, to which place we came about a month since, and are having quiet holydays. Mary walks her twelve miles a day some days, and I my twenty on others. 'Tis all holyday with me now, you know. The change works admirably.

"For literary news, in my poor way, I have a one-act farce

going to be acted at Haymarket; but when? is the question. 'Tis an extravaganza, and like enough to follow Mr. H. 'The London Magazine' has shifted its publishers once more, and I shall shift myself out of it. It is fallen. My ambition is not at present higher than to write nonsense for the play-houses, to eke out a something contracted income. *Tempus erat.* There was a time, my dear Cornwallis, when the Muse, &c. But I am now in Mac Flecno's predicament—

'Promised a play, and dwindled to a farce.'

"Coleridge is better (was, at least, a few weeks since) than he has been for years. His accomplishing his book at last has been a source of vigour to him. We are on a half visit to his friend Allsop, at a Mrs. Leishman's, Enfield, but expect to be at Colebrooke cottage in a week or so, where, or anywhere, I shall be always most happy to receive tidings from you. G. Dyer is in the height of an uxorious paradise. His honeymoon will not wane till he wax cold. Never was a more happy pair, since Acme and Septimius, and longer. Farewell, with many thanks, dear S. Our loves to all round your Wrekin.

"Your old friend,
"C. LAMB."

The farce referred to in this letter was founded on Lamb's essay "On the Inconvenience of being Hanged." It was, perhaps, too slight for the stage, and never was honoured by a trial; but was ultimately published in "Blackwood's Magazine."

CHAPTER XVI.

[1826 to 1828.]

Letters to Robinson, Carey, Coleridge, Patmore, Procter, and Barton.

WHEN the first enjoyment of freedom was over, it may be doubted whether Lamb was happier for the change. He lost a grievance on which he could lavish all the fantastical exaggeration of a sufferer without wounding the feelings of any individual, and perhaps the loss was scarcely compensated by the listless leisure which it brought him. Whenever the facile kindness of his disposition permitted, he fled

from those temptations of society, which he could only avoid by flight; and his evening hours of solitude were hardly so sweet as when they were the reliefs and resting-places of his mind—"glimpses which might make him less forlorn" of the world of poetry and romance. His mornings were chiefly occupied in long walks, sometimes extending to ten or twelve miles, in which at this time he was accompanied by a noble dog, the property of Mr. Hood, to whose humours Lamb became almost a slave, and who at last acquired so portentous an ascendency, that Lamb requested his friend Mr. Patmore to take him under his care.* At length the desire of assisting Mr. Hone in his struggle to support his family by antiquarian research and modern pleasantry, renewed to him the blessing of regular labour; he began the task of reading through the glorious heap of dramas collected at the British Museum under the title of the "Garrick Plays," to glean scenes of interest and beauty for the work of his friend; and the work of kindness brought with it its own reward.

"It is a sort of office work to me," says Lamb, in a letter to Barton; "hours ten to four the same. It does me good. Men must have regular occupation that have been used to it."

The Christmas of 1825 was a melancholy season for Lamb. He had always from a boy spent Christmas in the Temple with Mr. Norris, an officer of the Inner Temple, and this Christmas was made wretched by the last illness of his oldest friend. Anxious to excite the sympathy of the Benchers of the Inn for the survivers, Lamb addressed the following letter to a friend as zealous as himself in all generous offices, in order that he might show it to some of the Benchers.

* The following allusion to Lamb's subservience to Dash is extracted from one of a series of papers, written in a most cordial spirit, and with great characteristic power, by the friend to whom Dash was assigned, which appeared in the "Court Magazine." "During these interminable rambles, heretofore pleasant in virtue of their profound loneliness and freedom from restraint, Lamb made himself a perfect slave to the dog, whose habits were of the most extravagantly errant nature; for, generally speaking, the creature was half a mile off from his companion either before or behind, scouring the fields or roads in all directions, scampering up or down 'all manner of streets,' and leaving Lamb in a perfect fever of irritation and annoyance; for he was afraid of losing the dog when it was out of sight, and yet could not persuade himself to keep it *in* sight for a moment by curbing its roving spirit. Dash knew Lamb's weakness in these particulars as well as he did himself, and took a due doglike advantage of it. In the Regent's Park, in particular, Dash had his master completely at his mercy; for the moment they got into the ring, he used to get through the paling on to the greensward, and disappear for a quarter or half an hour together, knowing perfectly well that Lamb did not dare move from the spot where he (Dash) had disappeared till such time as he thought proper to show himself again. And they used to take this particular walk much oftener than they otherwise would, precisely because Dash liked it and Lamb did not." Under his second master we learn from the same source that Dash "subsided into the best bred and best behaved of his species."

TO MR. H. C. ROBINSON.

"Colebrooke Row, Islington, Saturday, 20th Jan., 1826.

"Dear Robinson—I called upon you this morning, and found you were gone to visit a dying friend. I had been upon a like errand. Poor Norris has been lying dying for now almost a week, such is the penalty we pay for having enjoyed a strong constitution! Whether he knew me or not, I know not; or whether he saw me through his poor glazed eyes; but the group I saw about him I shall not forget. Upon the bed or about it were assembled his wife and two daughters, and poor deaf Richard, his son, looking doubly stupified. There they were, and seemed to have been sitting all the week. I could only reach out a hand to Mrs. Norris. Speaking was impossible in that mute chamber. By this time I hope it is all over with him. In him I have a loss the world cannot make up. He was my friend and my father's friend all the life I can remember. I seem to have made foolish friendships ever since. Those are friendships which outlive a second generation. Old as I am waxing, in his eyes I was still the child he first knew me. To the last he called me Charley. I have none to call me Charley now. He was the last link that bound me to the Temple. You are but of yesterday. In him seem to have died the old plainness of manners and singleness of heart. Letters he knew nothing of, nor did his reading extend beyond the pages of the 'Gentleman's Magazine.' Yet there was a pride of literature about him from being among books (he was librarian), and from some scraps of doubtful Latin which he had picked up in his office of entering students, that gave him very diverting airs of pedantry. Can I forget the erudite look with which, when he had been in vain trying to make out a black-letter text of Chaucer in the Temple Library, he laid it down, and told me that—'in those old books, Charley, there is sometimes a deal of very indifferent spelling;' and seemed to console himself in the reflection! His jokes, for he had his jokes, are now ended; but they were old trusty perennials, staples that pleased after *decies repetita*, and were always as good as new. One song he had, which was reserved for the night of Christmas-day, which we always spent in the Temple. It was an old thing, and spoke of the flat bottoms of our foes, and the possibility of their coming over in darkness, and alluded to threats of an invasion many years blown over; and when he came to the part

> "We'll still make 'em run, and we'll still make 'em sweat,
> In spite of the devil and Brussels Gazette!"

his eyes would sparkle as with the freshness of an impending

event. And what is the Brussels Gazette now? I cry while I enumerate these trifles. 'How shall we tell them in a stranger's ear?'

* * * * * * *

"My first motive in writing, and, indeed, in calling on you, was to ask if you were enough acquainted with any of the benchers to lay a plain statement before them of the circumstances of the family. I almost fear not, for you are of another hall. But if you can oblige me and my poor friend, who is now insensible to any favours, pray exert yourself. You cannot say too much good of poor Norris and his poor wife.

"Yours ever,

"CHARLES LAMB."

In the spring of 1826, the following letters to Bernard Barton were written.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"Dear B. B.—I got your book not more than five days ago, so am not so negligent as I must have appeared to you with a fornight's sin upon my shoulders. I tell you with sincerity, that I think you have completely succeeded in what you intended to do. What is poetry may be disputed—these are poetry to me at least. They are concise, pithy, and moving; uniform as they are, and unembellished. I read them through at two sittings, without one sensation approaching to tedium. I do not know that among your many kind presents of this nature, this is not my favourite volume. The language is never lax, and there is a unity of design and feeling. You wrote them *with love*—to avoid the coxcombical phrase, *con amore*. I am particularly pleased with the 'Spiritual Law,' pages 34 and 35. It reminded me of Quarles, and 'holy Mr. Herbert,' as Izaak Walton calls him; the two best, if not only, of our devotional poets, though some prefer Watts and some Tom Moore. I am far from well or in my right spirits, and shudder at pen-and-ink work. I poke out a monthly crudity for Colburn in his magazine, which I call 'Popular Fallacies,' and periodically crush a proverb or two, setting up my folly against the wisdom of nations. Do you see the 'New Monthly.'

"One word I must object to in your little book, and it recurs more than once—*fadeless* is no genuine compound; loveless is, because love is a noun as well as a verb; but what is a fade? And I do not quite like whipping the Greek drama upon the back of 'Genesis,' page 8. I do not like praise handed in by disparagement; as I objected to a side censure on

Byron, &c., in the 'Lines on Bloomfield.' With these poor cavils excepted, your verses are without a flaw.

"C. LAMB."

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"Dear B. B.—You may know my letters by the paper and the folding. For the former, I live on scraps obtained in charity from an old friend whose stationary is a permanent perquisite; for folding, I shall do it neatly when I learn to tie my neckcloths. I surprise most of my friends by writing to them on ruled paper, as if I had not got past pothooks and hangers. Sealing-wax, I have none on my establishment; wafers of the coarsest bran supply its place. *When my epistles come to be weighed with Pliny's*, however *superior to the Roman* in delicate irony, judicious reflections, &c., his *gilt post* would bribe over the judges to him. All the time I was at the India House I never mended a pen; I now cut them to the stumps, marring rather than mending the primitive goose-quill. I cannot bear to pay for articles I used to get for nothing. (When Adam laid out his first penny upon nonpareils at some stall in Mesopotamia, I think it went hard with him, reflecting upon his old goodly orchard, where he had so many for nothing.) When I write to a great man at the court end, he opens with surprise upon a naked note, such as Whitechapel people interchange, with no sweet degrees of envelope. I never enclosed one bit of paper in another, nor understood the rationale of it. Once only I sealed with borrowed wax, to set Sir Walter Scott a wondering, impressed with the imperial quartered arms of England, which my friend Field bears in compliment to his descent, in the female line, from Oliver Cromwell. It must have set his antiquarian curiosity upon watering. To your question upon the currency I refer you to Mr. Robinson's last speech, where, if you can find a solution, I cannot. I think this, though, the best ministry we ever stumbled upon; gin reduced four shillings in the gallon, wine two shillings in the quart! This comes home to men's business and bosoms. My tirade against visiters was not meant particularly at you or A. K——. I scarce know what I meant, for I do not just now feel the grievance. I wanted to make an *article*. So in another thing I talked of somebody's *insipid wife*, without a correspondent object in my head: and a good lady, a friend's wife, whom I really *love* (don't startle, I mean in a lawful way), has looked shyly on me ever since. The blunders of personal application are ludicrous. I send out a character now and then on purpose to exercise the ingenuity of my friends. 'Popular Fallacies'

will go on. A little thing without name will also be printed on the Religion of the Actors, but it is out of your way; so I recommend you, with true author's hypocrisy, to skip it. We are about to sit down to roast beef, at which we could wish B. B. and B. B.'s daughter to be humble partakers. So much for my hint at visiters, which was scarcely calculated for droppers-in from Woodbridge; the sky does not drop such larks every day. My very kindest wishes to you all, with my sister's best love.

"C. LAMB."

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"May 16, 1826.

"Dear B. B.—I have had no spirits lately to begin a letter to you, though I am under obligations to you (how many?) for your neat little poem. 'Tis just what it professes to be, a simple tribute, in chaste verse, serious and sincere.

"I do not know how Friends will relish it, but we outlyers, honorary friends, like it very well. I have had my head and ears stuffed up with the east winds. A continual ringing in my brain of bells jangled, or the spheres touched by some raw angel. Is it not George the Third tuning the Hundredth Psalm? I get my music for nothing. But the weather seems to be softening, and will thaw my stunnings. Coleridge, writing to me a week or two since, began his note: '*Summer has set in with his usual severity.*' A cold summer is all I know disagreeable in cold. I do not mind the utmost rigour of real winter, but these smiling hypocritical Mays wither me to death. My head has been ringing chaos, like the day the winds were made, before they submitted to the discipline of a weathercock, before the quarters were made. In the street, with the blended noises of life about me, I hear, and my head is lightened; but in a room the hubbub comes back, and I am deaf as a sinner. Did I tell you of a pleasant sketch Hood has done, which he calls '*Very deaf indeed.*' It is of a good-natured stupid-looking old gentleman, whom a footpad has stopped, but, for his extreme deafness, cannot make him understand what he wants. The unconscious old gentleman is extending his ear-trumpet very complacently, and the fellow is firing a pistol into it to make him hear, but the ball will pierce his scull sooner than the report reach his sensorium. I choose a very little bit of paper, for my ear hisses when I bend down to write. I can hardly read a book, for *I miss that small soft voice which the idea of articulated words raises* (almost imperceptibly to you) *in a silent reader. I seem too deaf to see what I read.* But with a touch of returning zephyr my

head will melt. What lies you poets tell about May! It is the most ungenial part of the year. Cold crocuses, cold primroses, you take your blossoms in ice—a painted sun.

Unmeaning joy around appears,
And nature smiles as though she sneers!

"It is ill with me when I begin to look which way the wind blows. Ten years ago, I literally did not know the point from the broad end of your vane, which it was that indicated the quarter. I hope these ill winds have blown *over* you as they do through me.

* * * * * *

"So A. K. keeps a school; she teaches nothing wrong, I'll answer for't. I have a Dutch print of a schoolmistress; surrounded by little oldfashioned Fleminglings, with only one face among them. She a princess of a schoolmistress, wielding a rod for form more than use; the scene, an old monastic chapel, with a Madonna over her head, looking just as serious, as thoughtful, as pure, as gentle as herself. 'Tis a type of thy friend.

"Yours, with kindest wishes,

"C. LAMB."

About this time a little sketch was taken of Lamb, and published. It is certainly not flattering; but there is a touch of Lamb's character in it. He sent one of the prints to Coleridge, with the following note.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"Dear Coleridge—If I know myself, nobody more detests the display of personal vanity, which is implied in the act of sitting for one's picture, than myself. But, the fact is, that the likeness which accompanies this letter was stolen from my person at one of my unguarded moments by some too partial artist, and my friends are pleased to think that he has not much flattered me. Whatever its merits may be, you, who have so great an interest in the original, will have a satisfaction in tracing the features of one that has so long esteemed you. There are times when, in a friend's absence, these graphic representations of him almost seem to bring back the man himself. The painter, whoever he was, seems to have taken me in one of those disengaged moments, if I may so term them, when the native character is so much more honestly displayed than can be possible in the restraints of an enforced sitting attitude. Perhaps it rather describes me as a thinking man than a man in the act of thought. Whatever its preten-

sions, I know it will be dear to you, towards whom I should wish my thoughts to flow in a sort of an undress rather than in the more studied graces of diction.

"I am, dear Coleridge, yours sincerely,

"C. LAMB."

In the following summer Lamb and his sister went on a long visit to Enfield, which ultimately led to his giving up Colebrooke cottage, and becoming a constant resident at that place. It was a great sacrifice to him, who loved London so well; but his sister's health and his own required a secession from the crowd of visiters who pressed on him at Islington, and whom he could not help welcoming. He thus invited Mr. Carey, now of the British Museum, to look in upon his retreat.

TO MR. CAREY.

"Dear Sir—It is whispered me that you will not be unwilling to look into our doleful hermitage. Without more preface, you will gladden our cell by accompanying our old chums of the London, Darley and A. C., to Enfield on Wednesday. You shall have hermits' fare, with talk as seraphical as the novelty of the divine life will permit, with an innocent retrospect to the world which we have left, when I will thank you for your hospitable offer at Chiswick, and, with plain hermit reasons, evince the necessity of abiding here.

"Without hearing from you, then, you shall give us leave to expect you. I have long had it on my conscience to invite you, but spirits have been low; and I am indebted to chance for this awkward but most sincere invitation.

"Yours, with best loves to Mrs. Carey,

"C. LAMB.

"D. knows all about the coaches. Oh for a museum in the wilderness!"

The following letter was addressed about this time to Coleridge, who was seriously contemplating a poetical pantomime.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"Dear C.—We will, with great pleasure, be with you on Thursday in the next week early. Your finding out my style in your nephew's pleasant book is surprising to me. I want eyes to descry it. You are a little too hard upon his morality, though I confess he has more of Sterne about him than Sternhold. But he saddens into excellent sense before the conclu-

sion. Your query shall be submitted to Miss Kelly, though it is obvious that the pantomime, when done, will be more easy to decide upon than in proposal. I say, do it by all means. I have Decker's play by me, if you can filch anything out of it. Miss G——, with her kitten eyes, is an actress, though she shows it not at all; and pupil to the former, whose gestures she mimics in comedy to the disparagement of her own natural manner, which is agreeable. It is funny to see her bridling up her neck, which is native to F. K.; but there is no setting another's manners upon one's shoulders any more than their head. I am glad you esteem Manning, though you see but his husk or shrine. He discloses not save to select worshippers, and will leave the world without any one hardly but me knowing how stupendous a creature he is. I am perfecting myself in the 'Ode to Eton College' against Thursday, that I may not appear unclassic. I have just discovered that it is much better than the 'Elegy.'

"In haste,

"C. L.

"P.S. I do not know what to say to your *latest* theory about Nero being the Messiah, though by all accounts he was a 'nointed one."

Lamb's desire for dramatic success was not even yet wholly chilled. In this summer he wrote a little piece on the story of Crabbe's tale of the "Confidant," which was never produced, but ultimately published in "Blackwood's Magazine." It runs on agreeably in melodious blank verse, entirely free from the occasional roughnesses of "John Woodvil," but has not sufficient breadth or point for the stage. He alludes to it in the following letter

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"Dear B. B.—I have not been able to answer you, for we have had and are having (I just snatch a moment) our poor quiet retreat, to which we fled from society, full of company. Whither can I take wing from the oppression of human faces! Would I were in a wilderness of apes, tossing cocoanuts about, grinning and grinned at!

"M—— was hoaxing you, surely, about my engraving; 'tis a little sixpenny thing, too like by half, in which the draughtsman has done his best to avoid flattery. There have been two editions of it, which, I think, are all gone, as they have vanished from the window where they hung—a printshop corner of Great and Little Queen streets, Lincoln's Inn Fields—where any London friend of yours may inquire for it, for I am

(though you *won't understand it*) at Enfield Chace. We have been here near three months, and shall stay two more, if people will let us alone; but they persecute us from village to village. So, don't direct to Islington again till further notice. I am trying my hand at a drama, in two acts, founded on Crabbe's 'Confidant,' *mutatis mutandis*. You like the Odyssey; did you ever read my 'Adventures of Ulysses,' founded on Chapman's old translation of it? for children or men. Chapman is divine, and my abridgment has not quite emptied him of his divinity. When you come to town I will show it you. You have well described your old fashionable grand paternal hall. Is it not odd that every one's earliest recollections are of some such place? I had my Blakesware (Blakesmoor in the 'London'). Nothing fills a child's mind like a large old mansion: better if un—or partially—occupied, peopled with the spirits of deceased members for the county, and justices of the quorum. Would I were buried in the peopled solitude of one, with my feelings at seven years old! Those marble busts of the emperors, they seemed as if they were to stand for ever, as they had stood from the living ages of Rome, in that old marble hall, and I to partake of their permanency. Eternity was while I thought not of time. But he thought of me, and they are toppled down, and corn covers the spot of the noble old dwelling and its princely gardens. I feel like a grasshopper that, chirping about the grounds, escapes his scythe only by my littleness. Even now he is whetting one of his smallest razors to clean wipe me out, perhaps. Well!"

The following is an acknowledgment of some verses which Lamb had begged for Miss Isola's album.

"Dear B. B.—I am thankful to you for your ready compliance with my wishes. Emma is delighted with your verses; and I have sent them, with four album poems of my own, to a Mr. F——, who is to be the editor of a more superb pocket-book than has yet appeared, by far! the property of some wealthy booksellers; but whom, or what its name, I forgot to ask. It is actually to have in it schoolboy exercises by his present majesty and the late Duke of York. Wordsworth is named as a contributor. F——, whom I have slightly seen, is editor of a forthcome or coming review of foreign books, and is intimately connected with Lockhart and ——. So I take it that this is a concern of Murray's. Walter Scott also contributes mainly. I have stood off a long time from these annuals, which are ostentatious trumpery, but could not withstand the request of Jameson, a particular friend of mine and Coleridge's.

"I shall hate myself in frippery, strutting along, and

'Vying in finery with beaux and belles,
Future Lord Byrons and sweet L. E. L.'s.'

Your taste, I see, is less simple than mine, which the difference in our persuasions has doubtless effected. In fact, of late you have so Frenchified your style, larding it with *hors de combat* and *au desespoirs*, that, o' my conscience, the Foxian blood is quite dried out of you, and the skipping monsieur spirit has been infused.

"If you have anything you like to send further, I dare say an honourable place would be given to it; but I have not heard from F—— since I sent mine, nor shall I probably again, and therefore I do not solicit it as from him. Yesterday I sent off my tragi-comedy to Mr. Kemble; wish it luck. I made it all ('tis blank verse, and, I think, of the true old dramatic cut), or most of it, in the green lanes about Enfield, where I am, and mean to remain, in spite of your peremptory doubts on that head. Your refusal to lend your poetical sanction to my 'Icon,' and your reasons to Evans are most sensible. Maybe I may hit on a line or two of my own jocular, maybe not. Do you never Londonize again? I should like to talk over old poetry with you, of which I have much, and you, I think, little. I would willingly come and work for you three weeks or so to let you loose. Would I could sell or give you some of my leisure! POSITIVELY, THE BEST THING A MAN CAN HAVE TO DO IS NOTHING! and, *next to that*, perhaps, GOOD WORKS! I am but poorlyish, and feel myself writing a dull letter; poorlyish from company; not generally, for I never was better, nor took more walks, fourteen miles a day on an average, with a sporting dog, Dash. You would not know the plain poet any more than he doth recognise James Naylor tricked out *au dèsespoy* (how do you spell it?).

"C. LAMB."

The following was written to the friend to whom Lamb had intrusted Dash a few days after the parting.

TO MR. PATMORE.

"Mrs. Leishman's, Chace, Enfield.

"Dear P.—Excuse my anxiety, but how is Dash? I should have asked if Mrs. P——e kept her rules, and was improving; but Dash came uppermost. The order of our thoughts should be the order of our writing. Goes he muzzled, or *aperto ore*? Are his intellects sound, or does he wander a little in *his* conversation? You cannot be too careful to watch the first symptoms of incoherence. The first illogical snarl he makes, to

St. Luke's with him. All the dogs here are going mad if you believe the overseers; but, I protest, they seem to me very rational and collected. But nothing is so deceitful as mad people to those who are not used to them. Try him with hot water: if he won't lick it up, it is a sign—he does not like it. Does his tail wag horizontally or perpendicularly? That has decided the fate of many dogs in Enfield. Is his general deportment cheerful? I mean when he is pleased—for otherwise there is no judging. You can't be too careful. Has he bit any of the children yet? If he has, have them shot, and keep *him* for curiosity, to see if it was the hydrophobia. They say all our army in India had it at one time; but that was in *Hyder*-Ally's time. Do you get paunch for him? Take care the sheep was sane. You might pull out his teeth (if he would let you), and then you need not mind if he were as mad as a bedlamite. It would be rather fun to see his odd ways. It might amuse Mrs. P—— and the children. They'd have more sense than he. He'd be like a fool kept in a family, to keep the household in good-humour with their own understanding. You might teach him the mad dance, set to the mad howl. *Madge Owl*et would be nothing to him. 'My! how he capers!' [In the margin is written, 'One of the children speaks this.'*] * * * * * What I scratch out is a German quotation from Lessing, on the bite of rabid animals; but I remember you don't read German. But Mrs. P—— may, so I wish I had let it stand. The meaning in English is—'Avoid to approach an animal suspected of madness, as you would avoid fire or a precipice,' which, I think, is a sensible observation. The Germans are certainly profounder than we. If the slightest suspicion arises in your breast that all is not right with him, muzzle him and lead him in a string (common packthread will do—he don't care for twist) to Mr. Hood's, his quondam master, and he'll take him in at any time. You may mention your suspicion, or not, as you like, or as you think it may wound or not Mr. H.'s feelings. Hood, I know, will wink at a few follies in Dash, in consideration of his former sense. Besides, Hood is deaf, and, if you hinted anything, ten to one he would not hear you. Besides, you will have discharged your conscience, and laid the child at the right door, as they say.

"We are dawdling our time away very idly and pleasantly at a Mrs. Leishman's, Chace, Enfield, where, if you come a hunting, we can give you cold meat and a tankard. Her husband is a tailor; but that, you know, does not make her

* Here three lines are carefully erased.

one. I knew a jailer (which rhymes), but his wife was a fine lady.

"Let us hear from you respecting Mrs. P——'s regimen. I send my love in a —— to Dash.

"C. LAMB."

On the *outside* of the letter is written:—

"Seriously, I wish you would call upon Hood when you are that way. He's a capital fellow. I've sent him two poems, one ordered by his wife, and written to order; and 'tis a week since, and I've not heard from him. I fear something is the matter.

"Omitted within:

"Our kindest remembrance to Mrs. P."

He thus, in December, expresses his misery in a letter

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"My dear B. B.—I have scarce spirits to write, yet am harassed with not writing. Enfield and everything is very gloomy. I feel most thankful for the spinsterly attentions of your sister. Thank that kind 'knitter in the sun!' What nonsense seems verse when one is seriously out of hope and spirits! I mean, that at this time I have some nonsense to write, under pain of incivility. Would to the fifth heaven no coxcombress had ever invented albums!

"I have not received the annual, nor the slightest notice from —— about omitting four or five of my things. The best thing is never to hear of such a thing as a bookseller again, or to think there are publishers. Second-hand stationers and old bookstalls for me; authorship should be an idea of the past. Old kings, old bishops are venerable; all present is hollow. I cannot make a letter. I have no straw, not a pennyworth of chaff, only this may stop your kind importunity to know about us. There is a comfortable house, but no tenants. *One* does not make a *household*. Do not think I am quite in despair; but, in addition to hope protracted, I have a stupifying cold and obstructing headache, and the sun is dead!

"I will not fail to apprize you of the revival of a beam. Meantime accept this, rather than think I have forgotten you all." * * * * * *

A proposal to erect a memorial to Clarkson, upon the spot by the wayside where he stopped when on a journey from

Cambridge to London, and formed the great resolution of devoting his life to the abolition of the slave trade, produced from Lamb the following letter to the lady who had announced it to him:—

"Dear Madam—I return your list with my name. I should be sorry that any respect should be going on towards Clarkson, and I be left out of the conspiracy. Otherwise, I frankly own that to pillarize a man's good feelings in his lifetime is not to my taste. Monuments to goodness, even after death, are equivocal. I turn away from Howard's, I scarce know why. Goodness blows no trumpet, nor desires to have it blown. *We should be modest for a modest man*—as he is for himself. The vanities of life—art, poetry, skill military—are subjects for trophies; not the silent thoughts arising in a good man's mind in lonely places. Was I Clarkson, I should never be able to walk or ride near the spot again. Instead of bread, we are giving him a stone. Instead of the locality recalling the noblest moment of his existence, it is a place at which his friends (that is, himself) blow to the world, 'What a good man is he!' I sat down upon a hillock at Forty Hill yesternight—a fine contemplative evening—with a thousand good speculations about mankind. How I yearned with cheap benevolence! I shall go and inquire of the stonecutter that cuts the tombstones here what a stone with a short inscription will cost, just to say, 'Here C. Lamb loved his brethren of mankind.' Everybody will come there to love. As I can't well put my own name, I shall put about a subscription:

Mrs. ——	£0	5	0	
Procter,	0	2	6	
G. Dyer,	0	1	0	
Mr. Godwin,	0	0	0	
Mrs. Godwin,	0	0	0	
Mr. Irving,				a watch chain,
Mr. ——				the proceeds of —— first edition.
	£0	8	6	

"I scribble in haste from here, where we shall be some time. Pray request Mr. —— to advance the guinea for me, which shall faithfully be forthcoming; and pardon me that I don't see the proposal in quite the light that he may. The kindness of his motives, and his power of appreciating the passage, I thoroughly agree in.

"With most kind regards to him, I conclude,

"Dear madam, yours truly,

"C. LAMB

"From Mrs. Leishman's, Chace, Enfield."

The following appears to have been written in October, 1828.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"A splendid edition of 'Bunyan's Pilgrim!' Why the thought is enough to turn one's moral stomach. His cockle-hat and staff transformed to a smart cocked beaver and a jemmy cane; his amice gray to the last Regent-street cut; and his painful palmer's pace to the modern swagger. Stop thy friend's sacrilegious hand. Nothing can be done for B. but to reprint the old cuts in as homely but good a style as possible. The Vanity Fair and the Pilgrims there—the Silly-soothness in his setting-out countenance—the Christian Idiocy (in a good sense) of his admiration of the shepherds on the Delectable Mountains; the lions, so truly allegorical, and remote from any similitude to Pidcock's; the great head (the author's), capacious of dreams and similitudes, dreaming in the dungeon. Perhaps you don't know my edition, what I had when a child. If you do, can you bear new designs from Martin, enamelled into copper or silver-plate by Heath, accompanied with verses from Mrs. Hemans's pen. Oh how unlike his own!

Wouldst thou divert thyself from melancholy?
Wouldst thou be pleasant, yet be far from folly?
Wouldst thou read riddles, and their explanation,
Or else be drown'd in thy contemplation?
Dost thou love picking meat? or wouldst thou see
A man i' the clouds, and hear him speak to thee?
Wouldst thou be in a dream, and yet not sleep?
Or wouldst thou in a moment laugh and weep?
Or wouldst thou lose thyself, and catch no harm,
And find thyself again without a charm?
Wouldst read *thyself*, and read thou knowst not what,
And yet know whether thou art bless'd or not
By reading the same lines? Oh then come hither,
And lay my book, thy head, and heart together.

JOHN BUNYAN.

Show me such poetry in any one of the fifteen forthcoming combinations of show and emptiness yclept 'Annuals.' So there's verses for thy verses; and now let me tell you, that the sight of your hand gladdened me. I have been daily trying to write to you, but paralyzed. You have spurred me on to this tiny effort, and at intervals I hope to hear from and talk to you. But my spirits have been in an oppressed way for a long time, and they are things which must be to you of faith, for who can explain depression! Yes, I am hooked into the 'Gem,' but only for some lines written on a dead infant of the editor's, which being, as it were, his property, I could not refuse their appearing; but I hate the paper, the type, the gloss,

the dandy plates, the names of contributors poked up into your eyes in the first page, and whisked through all the covers of magazines, the barefaced sort of emulation, the immodest candidateship, brought into so little space. In those old 'Londons,' a signature was lost in the wood of matter, the paper coarse (till latterly, which spoiled them); in short, I detest to appear in an annual. What a fertile genius (and a quiet good soul withal) is Hood. He has fifty things in hand; farces to supply the Adelphi for the season; a comedy for one of the great theatres just ready; a whole entertainment, by himself, for Matthews and Yates to figure in; a meditated Comic Annual for next year, to be nearly done by himself. You'd like him very much.

"Wordsworth, I see, has a good many pieces announced in one of the Annuals, not our Gem. W. Scott has distributed himself like a bribe haunch among 'em. Of all the poets, Carey has had the good sense to keep quite clear of 'em, with gentle, manly, right notions. Don't think I set up for being proud on this point; I like a bit of flattery, tickling my vanity, as well as any one. But these pompous masquerades without masks (naked names or faces) I hate. So there's a bit of my mind. Besides, they infallibly cheat you, I mean the booksellers. If I get but a copy, I only expect it from Hood's being my friend. Coleridge has lately been here. He too is deep among the prophets, the year servers—the mob of gentlemen annuals. But they'll cheat him, I know. And now, dear B. B., the sun shining out merrily, and the dirty clouds we had yesterday having washed their own faces clean with their own rain, tempts me to wander up Winchmore Hill, or into some of the delightful vicinages of Enfield, which I hope to show you at some time when you can get a few days up to the great town. Believe me it would give both of us great pleasure to show you our pleasant farms and villages.

"We both join in kindest love to you and yours.

"C. LAMB, *redivivus*."

The following is of December, and closes the letters which remain of this year.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"Dec., 1828.

"Dear B. B.—I am ashamed to receive so many nice books from you, and to have none to send you in return. You are always sending me some fruits or wholesome potherbs, and mine is the garden of the Sluggard, nothing but weeds, or

scarce they. Nevertheless, if I knew how to transmit it, I would send you Blackwood's of this month, which contains a little drama, to have your opinion of it, and how far I have improved, or otherwise, upon its prototype. Thank you for your kind sonnet. It does me good to see the Dedication to a Christian Bishop. I am for a comprehension, as divines call it; but so as that the Church shall go a good deal more than half way over to the silent meeting-house. I have ever said that the Quakers are the only *professors* of Christianity, as I read it in the Evangiles; I say *professors*—marry, as to practice, with their gaudy hot types and poetical vanities, they are much as one with the sinful. Martin's frontispiece is a very fine thing, let *C. L.* say what he please to the contrary. Of the poems, I like them, as a volume, better than any of the preceding; particularly 'Power and Gentleness'—'The Present'—'Lady Russell;' with the exception that I do not like the noble act of Curtius, true or false—one of the grand foundations of the old Roman patriotism—to be sacrificed to Lady R.'s taking notes on her husband's trial. If a thing is good, why invidiously bring it into comparison with something better? There are too few heroic things in this world to admit of our marshalling them in anxious etiquettes of precedence. Would you make a poem on the story of Ruth (pretty story!) and then say—Ay, but how much better is the story of 'Joseph and his brethren!' To go on, the stanzas to 'Chalon' wants the *name* of Clarkson in the body of them; it is left to inference. The 'Battle of Gibeon' is spirited, again. 'Godiva' is delicately touched. I have always thought it a beautiful story, characteristic of the old English times. But I could not help amusing myself with the thought—if Martin had chosen this subject for a frontispiece—there would have been in some dark corner a white lady, white as the walker on the waves, riding upon some mystical quadruped; and high above would have risen tower above tower—'a massy structure high'—the Tenterden steeples of Coventry, till the poor cross would scarce have known itself among the clouds; and, far above them all, the distant Clint hills peering over chimney-pots, piled up, Olympus fashion, till the admiring spectator (admirer of a noble deed) might have gone look for the lady, as you must hunt for the other in the lobster. But M—— should be made royal architect. What palaces he would pile! But, then, what parliamentary grants to make them good! Nevertheless, I like the frontispiece. The 'Elephant' is pleasant, and I am glad you are getting into a wider scope of subjects. There may be too much, not religion, but too many *good words* in a book, till it

becomes a rhapsody of words. I will just name that you have brought in the 'Song to the Shepherds' in four or five, if not six places. Now this is not good economy. The 'Enoch' is fine; and here I can sacrifice 'Elijah' to it, because 'tis illustrative only, and not disparaging of the latter prophet's departure. I like this best in the book. Lastly, I much like the 'Heron;' 'tis exquisite. Know you Lord Thurlow's Sonnet to a bird of that sort on Lacken water? If not, 'tis indispensable that I send it you, with my Blackwood. 'Fludyer' is pleasant—you are getting gay and Hood-ish. What is the enigma? Money? If not, I fairly confess I am foiled, and sphynx must . . . . . *eat me*. Four times I have tried to write—eat me, and the blotting pen turns it into —cat me. And now I will take my leave with saying I esteem thy verses, like thy present, honour thy frontispiece, and right reverence thy patron and dedication, and am, dear B. B.,

"Yours heartily,
"C. LAMB."

CHAPTER XVII.

[1829, 1830.]

Letters to Robinson, Procter, Barton, Wilson, Gilman, Wordsworth, and Dyer.

HAVING decided on residing entirely at Enfield, Lamb gave up Colebrooke cottage, and took what he described in a noteⁱlet to me as "an odd-looking gambogish-coloured house," at Chace-side, Enfield. The situation was far from picturesque, for the opposite side of the road only presented some middling tenements, two dissenting chapels, and a public house decorated with a swinging sign of a Rising Sun; but the neighbouring field walks were pleasant, and the country, as he liked to say, quite as good as Westmoreland.

He continued occasional contributions to the New Monthly, especially the series of "Popular Fallacies;" wrote short articles in the Athenæum; and a great many acrostics on the names of his friends. He had now a neighbour in Mr. Sergeant Wilde, to whom he was introduced by Mr. Burney, and whom he held in high esteem, though Lamb cared nothing for forensic eloquence, and thought very little of eloquence of any

kind, which, it must be confessed, when printed, is the most vapid of all reading. What political interest could not excite, personal regard produced in favour of his new friend; and Lamb supplied several versified squibs and snatches of electioneering songs to grace Wilde's contests at Newark. With these slender avocations his life was dull, and only a sense of duty induced him to persist in absence from London.

The following letter was written in acknowledgment of a parcel sent to Miss Lamb, comprising (what she had expressed a wish to have) a copper coal-scoop and a pair of elastic spectacles, accompanied by a copy of "Pamela," which, having been borrowed and supposed to be lost, had been replaced by another in Lamb's library.

TO MR. H. C. ROBINSON.

"Dear R.—Expectation was alert on the receipt of your strange-shaped present, while yet undisclosed from its fusc envelope. Some said 'tis a *viol da Gamba;* others pronounced it a fiddle; I myself hoped it a liqueur case, pregnant with *eau-de-vie* and such old nectar. When midwifed into daylight, the gossips were at a loss to pronounce upon its species. Most took it for a marrow-spoon, an apple-scoop, a banker's guinea-shovel; at length its true scope appeared; its drift, to save the back-bone of my sister stooping to scuttles. A philanthropic intent, borrowed, no doubt, from some of the colliers. You save people's backs one way, and break 'em again by loads of obligation. The spectacles are delicate and Vulcanian. No lighter texture than their steel did the cuckoldy blacksmith frame to catch Mrs. Vulcan and the captain in. For ungalled forehead, as for back unbursten, you have Mary's thanks. Marry, for my own peculium of obligation, 'twas supererogatory. A second part of Pamela was enough in conscience. Two Pamelas in a house is too much, without two Mr. B.'s to reward 'em.

"Mary, who is handselling her new aerial perspectives upon a pair of old worsted stockings trod out in Cheshunt lanes, sends her love. I, great good-liking. Bid us a personal farewell before you see the Vatican.

"CHARLES LAMB.

"Enfield, Feb. 27, 1829."

The following letter to his friend, who so prosperously combines conveyancing with poetry, is a fair sample of Lamb's elaborate and good-natured fictions. It is hardly necessary to say that the reference to a coolness between him and two of his legal friends is part of the fiction.

TO MR. PROCTER.

"My dear Procter—I am ashamed not to have taken the drift of your pleasant letter, which I find to have been pure invention. But jokes are not suspected in Bœotian Enfield. We are plain people, and our talk is of corn, and cattle, and Waltham markets. Besides, I was a little out of sorts when I received it. The fact is, I am involved in a case which has fretted me to death, and I have no reliance except on you to extricate me. I am sure you will give me your best legal advice, having no professional friend besides, but Robinson and Talfourd, with neither of whom, at present, I am on the best of terms. My brother's widow left a will, made during the lifetime of my brother, in which I am named sole executor, by which she bequeaths forty acres of arable property, which it seems she held under covert baron, unknown to my brother, to the heirs of the body of Elizabeth Dowden, her married daughter by a first husband, in fee simple, recoverable by fine; invested property, mind, for there is the difficulty; subjected to leet and quit rent; in short, worded in the most guarded terms, to shut out the property from Isaac Dowden, the husband. Intelligence has just come of the death of this person in India, where he made a will, entailing this property (which seemed entangled enough already) to the heirs of his body, that should not be born of his wife; for it seems, by the law in India, natural children can recover. They have put the cause into exchequer process here, removed by *certiorari* from the native courts; and the question is, whether I should, as executor, try the cause here, or again re-remove it to the Supreme Sessions at Bangalore, which I understand I can, or plead a hearing before the privy council here. As it involves all the little property of Elizabeth Dowden, I am anxious to take the fittest steps, and what may be least expensive. For God's sake assist me, for the case is so embarrassed that it deprives me of sleep and appetite. M. Burney thinks there is a case like it in chap. 170, sec. 5, in 'Fearn's Contingent Remainders.' Pray read it over with him dispassionately, and let me have the result. The complexity lies in the questionable power of the husband to alienate in usum; enfeoffments whereof he was only collaterally seised, &c.

"I had another favour to beg, which is the beggarliest of beggings. A few lines of verse for a young friend's album (six will be enough). M. Burney will tell you who she is I want 'em for. A girl of gold. Six lines—make 'em eight—signed Barry C——. They need not be very good, as I chiefly want 'em as a foil to mine. But I shall be seriously

obliged by any refuse scrap. We are in the last ages of the world, when St. Paul prophesied that women should be 'headstrong, lovers of their own wills, having albums.' I fled hither to escape the albumean persecution; and had not been in my new house twenty-four hours, when the daughter of the next house came in with a friend's album to beg a contribution, and the following day intimated she had one of her own. Two more have sprung up since. If I take the wings of the morning and fly unto the uttermost parts of the earth, there will albums be. New Holland has albums. But the age is to be complied with. M. B. will tell you the sort of girl I request the ten lines for. Somewhat of a pensive cast, what you admire. The lines may come before the law question, as that cannot be determined before Hilary Term, and I wish your deliberate judgment on that. The other may be flimsy and superficial. And if you have not burnt your returned letter, pray resend it me, as a monumental token of my stupidity."

* * * * * *

Lamb was as unfortunate in his communications with the annuals as unhappy in the importunities of the fair owners of albums. His favourite pieces were omitted; and a piece not his, called "The Widow," was, by a license of friendship, which Lamb forgave, inserted in one of them. He thus complains of these grievances in a letter which he wrote on the marriage of the daughter of a friend to a great theoretical chymist.

TO MR. PROCTER.

"Rumour tells us that Miss —— is married. Who is ——? I hear he is a great chymist. I am sometimes chymical myself. A thought strikes me with horror. Pray Heaven he may not have done it for the sake of trying chymical experiments upon her—young female subjects are so scarce. An't you glad about Burke's case? We may set off the Scotch murders against the Scotch novels. Hare, the Great Un hanged.

"M. B. is richly worth your knowing. He is on the top scale of my friendship ladder, on which an angel or two is still climbing, and some, alas! descending. Did you see a sonnet of mine in Blackwood's last? Curious construction! Elaborata facilitas! And now I'll tell. 'Twas written for 'The Gem,' but the editors declined it on the plea that it would *shock all mothers;* so they published 'The Widow' instead. I am born out of time. I have no conjecture about what the present world calls delicacy. I thought 'Rosamund

Gray' was a pretty modest thing. Hessey assures me that the world would not bear it. I have lived to grow into an indecent character. When my sonnet was rejected, I exclaimed, 'Hang the age, I will write for antiquity!'

"*Erratum* in sonnet. Last line but something, for tender, read tend. The Scotch do not know our law terms; but I find some remains of honest, plain old writing lurking there still. They were not so mealy-mouth'd as to refuse my verses. Maybe 'tis their oatmeal.

"Blackwood sent me —*l.* for the drama. Somebody cheated me out of it next day; and my new pair of breeches, just sent home, cracking at first putting on, I exclaimed, 'All tailors are cheats, and all men are tailors.' Then I was better."

The next contains Lamb's thanks for the verses he had begged for Miss Isola's album. They comprehended a compliment turning on the words Isola Bella.

TO MR. PROCTER.

"The comings in of an incipient conveyancer are not adequate to the receipt of three twopenny post non-paids in a week. Therefore, after this, I condemn my pen to long and deep silence, or shall awaken it to write to lords. Lest those raptures in this honeymoon of my correspondence you avow for the visitations of my Nuncio, after passing through certain natural grades, as Love, Love and Water, Love with the chill off, then subsiding to that point which the heroic suiter of his wedded dame, the noble-spirited Lord Randolph in the play, declares to be the ambition of his passion, a reciprocation of 'complacent kindness,' it suddenly plump down (scarce staying to bait at the mid point of indifference, so hungry it is for distaste) to a loathing and blank aversion, to the rendering probable such counter expressions as this, 'Hang that infernal twopenny postman (words which make the messenger 'lift up his hands and wonder who can use them'). While, then, you are not ruined, let me assure thee, oh thou above the painter, and next only under Giraldus Cambrensis, the most immortal and worthy to be immortal Barry, thy most ingenious and golden cadences do take my fancy mightily. But tell me, and tell me truly, gentle swain, is that Isola Bella a true spot in geographical denomination, or a floating Delos in thy brain. Lurks that fair island in verity in the bosom of Lake Maggiore, or some other with less poetic name, which thou hast Cornwallized for the occasion. And what if Maggiore itself be but a coinage of adaptation? Of this, pray re-

solve me immediately, for my albumess will be catechised on this subject; and how can I prompt her? Lake Leman I know, and Lemon Lake (in a punch bowl) I have swum in, though those lymphs be long since dry. But Maggiore may be in the moon. Unsphynx this riddle for me, for my shelves have no gazetteer."

The following letters contain a noble instance of Lamb's fine consideration and exquisite feeling in morality.

TO MR. PROCTER.

"When Miss —— was at Enfield, which she was in summer-time, and owed her health to its sun and genial influences, she visited (with young ladylike impertinence) a poor man's cottage that had a pretty baby (oh the yearnling!), gave it fine caps and sweetmeats. On a day broke into the parlour our two maids uproarious, 'Oh, ma'am, who do you think Miss —— has been working a cap for?' 'A child,' answered Mary, in true Shandean female simplicity. 'It's the man's child as was taken up for sheep-stealing.' Miss —— was staggered, and would have cut the connexion, but by main force I made her go and take her leave of her protégée. I thought, if she went no more, the Abactor or Abactor's wife (vide Ainsworth) would suppose she had heard something; and I have delicacy for a sheep-stealer. The overseers actually overhauled a mutton-pie at the baker's (his first, last, and only hope of mutton-pie), which he never came to eat, and thence inferred his guilt. Per occasionem cujus, I framed the sonnet; observe its elaborate construction. I was four days about it.

'THE GIPSY'S MALISON.

"Suck, baby, suck! mother's love grows by giving,
Drain the sweet founts that only thrive by wasting;
Black manhood comes, when riotous guilty living
Hands thee the cup that shall be death in tasting.
Kiss, baby, kiss! mother's lips shine by kisses,
Choke the warm breath that else would fall in blessings;
Black manhood comes, when turbulent guilty blisses
Tend thee the kiss that poisons mid caressings.
Hang, baby, hang! mother's love loves such forces,
Strain the fond neck that bends still to thy clinging;
Black manhood comes, when violent lawless courses
Leave thee a spectacle in rude air swinging."
So sang a wither'd beldam energetical,
And bann'd the ungiving door with lips prophetical.'

"Barry, study that sonnet. It is curiously and perversely elaborate. 'Tis a choking subject, and therefore the reader is directed to the structure of it. See you? and was this a

fourteener to be rejected by a trumpery annual? forsooth, 'twould shock all mothers; and may all mothers, who would so be shocked, be hanged! as if mothers were such sort of logicians as to infer the future hanging of *their* child from the theoretical hangibility (or capacity of being hanged, if the judge pleases) of every infant born with a neck on. Oh B. C., my whole heart is faint, and my whole head is sick (how is it?) at this cursed, canting, unmasculine age!"

* * * * * *

There is a little Latin letter about the same time to the same friend.

TO MR. PROCTER.

"Facundissime Poeta! quanquam istiusmodi epitheta oratoribus potiùs quam poetis attinere facilè scio—tamen, facundissime!

"Commoratur nobiscum jamdiu, in agro Enfeldiense, scilicet, leguleius futurus, illustrissimus Martinus Burneius, otium agens, negotia nominalia, et officinam clientum vacuam, paululum fugiens. Orat, implorat te—nempe, Martinus—ut si (quòd Dii faciant) fortè fortunâ, absente ipso, advenerit tardus cliens, eum certiorem feceris per literas hûc missas. Intelligisne? an me Anglicè et barbaricè ad te hominem perdoctum scribere oportet? C. AGNUS.

"Si status de franco tenemento datur avo, et in eodem facto si mediate vel immediate datur *hæredibus vel hæredibus corporis dicti avi*, postrema hæc verba sunt Limitationis non Perquisitionis.

"Dixi. CARLAGNULUS."

An allusion to Rogers, worthy of both, occurs in a letter

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"June 3, 1829.

"Dear B. B.—To get out of home themes, have you seen Southey's 'Dialogues?' His lake descriptions, and the account of his library at Keswick, are very fine. But he needed not have called up the ghost of More to hold the conversations with, which might as well have passed between A. and B., or Caius and Lucius. It is making too free with a defunct chancellor and martyr.

"I feel as if I had nothing further to write about. Oh! I forgot; the prettiest letter I ever read, that I have received from 'Pleasures of Memory' Rogers, in acknowledgment of a sonnet I sent him on the loss of his brother.

"It is too long to transcribe, but I hope to show it you some day, as I hope some time again to see you when all of us are well. Only it ends thus, 'We were nearly of an age (he was the elder); he was the only person in the world in whose eyes I always appeared young.'"

* * * * * *

What a lesson does the following read to us from one who, while condemned to uninteresting industry, thought happiness consisted in an affluence of time!

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"Enfield Chace-side, Saturday, 25th July, A. D. 1829, 11 A. M.

"There—a fuller, plumper, juicier date never dropped from Idumean palm. Am I in the date-ive case now? if not, a fig for dates, which is more than a date is worth. I never stood much affected to those limitary specialities. Least of all, since the date of my superannuation.

What have I with time to do?
Slaves of desks, 'twas meant for you.

But town, with all my native hankering after it, is not what it was. The streets, the shops are left, but all old friends are gone. And in London I was frightfully convinced of this as I passed houses and places, empty caskets now. I have ceased to care almost about anybody. The bodies I cared for are in graves or dispersed. My old chums, that lived so long and flourished so steadily, are crumbled away. When I took leave of our adopted young friend at Charing Cross, 'twas a heavy unfeeling rain, and I had nowhere to go. Home have I none, and not a sympathizing house to turn to in the great city. Never did the waters of heaven pour down on a forlorner head. Yet I tried ten days at a sort of friend's house, but it was large and straggling—one of the individuals of my old long knot of friends, card-players, pleasant companions, that have tumbled to pieces, into dust and other things; and I got home on Thursday, convinced that it was better to get home to my hole at Enfield, and hide like a sick cat in my corner. And to make me more alone, our ill-tempered maid is gone, who, with all her airs, was yet a home-piece of furniture, a record of better days; and the young thing that has succeeded her is good and attentive, but she is nothing. And I have no one here to talk over old matters with. *Scolding* and *quarrelling* have *something* of *familiarity* and a *community* of *interest*; they imply acquaintance; *they are of one sentiment, which is of the family of dearness.*

"I can neither scold at nor quarrel at this insignificant in-

plement of household services; she is less than a cat, and just better than a deal dresser. What I can do, and over-do, is to walk; but deadly long are the days, these summer all-day-days, with but a half hour's candlelight, and no firelight. I do not write, tell your kind inquisitive Eliza, and can hardly read. 'Tis cold work, authorship, without something to puff one into fashion. Could you not write something on Quakerism for Quakers to read, but nominally addressed to Non-Quakers, explaining your dogmas, as waiting on the Spirit by the analogy of human calmness, and waiting on the judgment? I scarcely know what I mean, but to make Non-Quakers reconciled to your doctrines, by showing something like them in mere human operations; but I hardly understand myself, so let it pass for nothing. I assure you, *no work* is worse than *over work*. The mind preys on itself, the most unwholesome food. I bragged formerly that I could not have too much time. I have a surfeit; with few years to come, the days are wearisome. But weariness is not eternal. Something will shine out to take the load off that crushes me, which is at present intolerable. I have killed an hour or two in this poor scrawl. I am a sanguinary murderer of time, and would kill him inchmeal just now. But the snake is vital. Well, I shall write merrier anon. 'Tis the present copy of my countenance I send, and to complain is a little to alleviate. May you enjoy yourself as far as the wicked world will let you, and think that you are not quite alone, as I am! Health to Lucia, and to Anna, and kind remembrances.

"Your forlorn

"C. L."

The cares of housekeeping pressed too heavily on Miss Lamb, and her brother resolved to resign the dignity of a housekeeper for the independence of a lodger. A couple of old dwellers in Enfield, hard by his cottage, had the good fortune to receive them. Lamb refers to the change in the following letter, acknowledging the receipt of Wilson's 'Life of De Foe,' in which a criticism from his pen was inserted, imbodying the sentiments which he had expressed some years before.

TO MR. WALTER WILSON.

"Enfield, 15th November, 1809.

"My dear Wilson—I have not opened a packet of unknown contents for many years that gave me so much pleasure as when I disclosed your three volumes. I have given them a careful perusal, and they have taken their degree of classical

books upon my shelves. De Foe was always my darling, but what darkness was I in as to far the larger part of his writings! I have now an epitome of them all. I think the way in which you have done the 'Life' the most judicious you could have pitched upon. You have made him tell his own story, and your comments are in keeping with the tale. Why, I never heard of such a work as 'the Review.' Strange that, in my stall-hunting days, I never so much as lit upon an odd volume of it. This circumstance looks as if they were never of any great circulation. But I may have met with 'em, and, not knowing the prize, overpassed 'em. I was almost a stranger to the whole history of Dissenters in those reigns, and picked my way through that strange book, the 'Consolidator,' at random. How affecting are some of his personal appeals: what a machine of projects he set on foot, and following writers have picked his pocket of the patents! I do not understand whereabouts in Roxana he himself left off. I always thought the complete-tourist-sort of description of the town she passes through on her last embarcation miserably unseasonable and out of place. I knew not they were spurious. Enlighten me as to where the apocryphal matter commences. I, by accident, can correct one A. D., 'Family Instructor,' vol. ii., 1718; you say his first volume had then reached the fourth edition; now I have a fifth, printed for Eman Matthews, 1717. So have I plucked one rotten date, or rather picked it up where it had inadvertently fallen, from your flourishing date-tree, the Palm of Engaddi. I may take it for my pains. I think yours a book which every public library must have, and every English scholar should have. I am sure it has enriched my meager stock of the author's works. I seem to be twice as opulent. Mary is by my side, just finishing the second volume. It must have interest to divert her away so long from her modern novels. Coleridge will be quite jealous. I was a little disappointed at my 'Ode to the Treadmill' not finding a place, but it came out of time. The two papers of mine will puzzle the reader, being so akin. Odd, that, never keeping a scrap of my own letters, with some fifteen years' interval, I should nearly have said the same things. But I shall always feel happy in having my name go down any how with De Foe's, and that of his historiographer. I promise myself, if not immortality, yet diuternity of being read in consequence. We have both had much illness this year, and feeling infirmities and fretfulness grow upon us; we have cast off the cares of housekeeping, sold off our goods, and commenced boarding and lodging with a very comfortable old couple next door to where you found us. We use a sort

of common table. Nevertheless, we have reserved a private one for an old friend; and when Mrs. Wilson and you revisit Babylon, we shall pray you to make it yours for a season. Our very kindest remembrances to you both.

"From your old friend and *fellow-journalist*, now in *two instances*,

"C. LAMB.

"Hazlitt is going to make your book a basis for a review of De Foe's Novels in 'the Edinbro'.' I wish I had health and spirits to do it. Hone I have not seen, but I doubt not he will be much pleased with your performance. I very much hope you will give us an account of Dunton, &c. But what I should more like to see would be a life and times of Bunyan. Wishing health to you, and long life to your healthy book, again I subscribe me,

"Yours in verity,
"C. L."

About the same time the following letter was written, alluding to the same change.

TO MR. GILMAN.

"Dear Gilman—Allsop brought me your kind message yesterday. How can I account for not having visited Highgate this long time? Change of place seemed to have changed me. How grieved I was to hear in what indifferent health Coleridge has been, and I not to know of it! A little school divinity, well applied, may be healing. I send him honest Tom of Aquin; that was always an obscure great idea to me; I never thought or dreamed to see him in the flesh, but t'other day I rescued him from a stall in Barbican, and brought him off in triumph. He comes to greet Coleridge's acceptance, for his shoe-latchets I am unworthy to unloose. Yet there are pretty pro's and con's, and such unsatisfactory learning in him. Commend me to the question of etiquette—'*utrum annunciatio debuerit fieri per angelum*'—*Quæst.* 30, *Articulus* 2. I protest, till now I had thought Gabriel a fellow of some mark and likelihood, not a simple esquire, as I find him. Well, do not break your lay brains, nor I neither, with these curious nothings. They are nuts to our dear friend, whom hoping to see at your first friendly hint that it will be convenient, I end with begging our very kindest loves to Mrs. Gilman. We have had a sorry house of it here. Our spirits have been reduced till we were at hope's end what to do. Obliged to leave this house, and afraid to engage another, till, in extremity, I took the desperate resolve of kicking house and

all down, like Bunyan's pack; and here we are in a new life at board and lodging, with an honest couple our neighbours. We have ridded ourselves of the cares of dirty acres; and the change, though of less than a week, has had the most beneficial effects on Mary already. She looks two years and a half younger for it. But we have had sore trials.

"God send us one happy meeting! Yours faithfully,

"C. LAMB.

"Chace-side, Enfield, 26th Oct., 1829."

The first result of the experiment was happy, as it brought improved health to Miss Lamb; to which Lamb refers in the following letter to his Suffolk friend, who had announced to him his appointment as assignee under a bankruptcy.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"December 8th, 1829.

"My dear B. B.—You are very good to have been uneasy about us, and I have the satisfaction to tell you that we are both in better health and spirits than we have been for a year or two past. The cause may not appear quite adequate when I tell you that a course of ill health and spirits brought us to the determination of giving up our house here, and we are boarding and lodging with a worthy couple, long inhabitants of Enfield, where everything is done for us without our trouble, further than a reasonable weekly payment. We should have done so before, but it is not easy to flesh and blood to give up an ancient establishment, to discard old Penates, and from housekeepers to turn housesharers. (N.B. We are not in the workhouse.) Diocletian, in his garden, found more repose than on the imperial seat of Rome; and the nob of Charles V. ached seldomer under a monk's cowl than under the diadem. With such shadows of assimilation we countenance our degradation. With such a load of dignified cares just removed from our shoulders, we can the more understand and pity the accession to yours, by the advancement to an assigneeship. I will tell you honestly, B. B., that it has been my long deliberate judgment that all bankrupts, of what denomination, civil or religious, soever, ought to be hanged. The pity of mankind has for ages run in a wrong direction, and been diverted from poor creditors (how many have I known sufferers! Hazlitt has just been defrauded of 100*l.* by his bookseller friends breaking) to scoundrel debtors. I know all the topics—that distress may overtake an honest man without his fault; that the failure of one that he trusted was his calamity, &c. Then let *both* be hanged. Oh how careful

this would make traders! These are my deliberate thoughts, after many years' experience in matters of trade. * * Trade will never flourish in this land till such a law is established. I write big, not to save ink, but eyes, mine having been troubled with reading through three folios of old Fuller in almost as few days, and I went to bed last night in agony, and am writing with a vial of eyewater before me, alternately dipping in vial and inkstand. This may inflame my zeal against bankrupts, but it was my speculation when I could see better. Half the world's misery (Eden else) is owing to want of money, and all that want is owing to bankrupts. I declare I would, if the state wanted practitioners, turn hangman myself, and should have great pleasure in hanging the first after my salutary law should be established. I have seen no annuals, and wish to see none. I like your fun upon them, and was quite pleased with Bowles's sonnet. Hood is, or was, at Brighton; but a note (prose or rhyme) to him, Robert-street, Adelphi, I am sure, would extract a copy of *his*, which also I have not seen.

"Wishing you and yours all health, I conclude while these frail glasses are, to me, eyes.

"C. L."

The following letter, written in the beginning of 1830, describes his landlord and landlady, and expresses, with a fine solemnity, the feelings which still held him at Enfield.

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

"And is it a year since we parted from you at the steps of Edmonton stage? There are not now the years that there used to be. The tale of the dwindled age of men, reported of successional mankind, is true of the same man only. We do not live a year in a year now. 'Tis a *punctum stans*. The seasons pass with indifference. Spring cheers not, nor winter heightens our gloom; autumn hath foregone its moralities—they are 'hey-pass re-pass,' as in a show-box. Yet, as far as last year recurs, for they scarce show a reflex now, they make no memory as heretofore, 'twas sufficiently gloomy. Let the sullen nothing pass. Suffice it, that after sad spirits, prolonged through many of its months, as it called them, we have cast our skins; have taken a farewell of the pompous, troublesome trifle called housekeeping, and are settled down into poor boarders and lodgers at next door with an old couple, the Baucis and Baucida of dull Enfield. Here we have nothing to do with our victuals but to eat them; with the garden but to see it grow; with the tax-gatherer but to hear him knock;

with the maid but to hear her scolded. Scot and lot, butcher, baker, are things unknown to us save as spectators of the pageant. We are fed we know not how; quietists, confiding ravens. We have the *otium pro dignitate*, a respectable insignificance. Yet in the self-condemned obliviousness, in the stagnation, some molesting yearnings of life, not quite killed, rise, prompting me that there was a London, and that I was of that old Jerusalem. In dreams I am in Fleet Market, but I wake and cry to sleep again. I die hard, a stubborn Eloisa in this detestable paraclete. What have I gained by health? Intolerable dulness. What by early hours and moderate meals? A total blank. Oh! never let the lying poets be believed who 'tice men from the cheerful haunts of streets, or think they mean it not of a country village. In the ruins of Palmyra I would gird myself up to solitude, or muse to the snoring of the Seven Sleepers; but to have a little teazing image of a town about one; country folks that do not look like country folks; shops two yards square, half a dozen apples, and two penn'orth of overlooked gingerbread for the lofty fruiterers of Oxford-street; and, for the immortal book and print stalls, a circulating library that stands still, where the show-picture is a last year's Valentine, and whither the fame of the last ten Scotch novels has not yet travelled (marry, they just begin to be conscious of Red-gauntlet); to have a new plastered flat church, and to be wishing that it was but a cathedral! The very blackguards here are degenerate; the topping gentry stock-brokers; the passengers too many to ensure your quiet, or let you go about whistling or gaping, too few to be the fine indifferent pageants of Fleet-street. Confining, room-keeping, thickest winter, is yet more bearable here than the gaudy months. Among one's books at one's fire by candle, one is soothed into an oblivion that one is not in the country; but with the light the green fields return, till I gaze, and in a calenture can plunge myself into St. Giles's. Oh! let no native Londoner imagine that health, and rest, and innocent occupation, interchange of converse sweet, and recreative study, can make the country anything better than altogether odious and detestable. A garden was the primitive prison, till man, with Promethean felicity and boldness, luckily sinned himself out of it. Thence followed Babylon, Nineveh, Venice, London, haberdashers, goldsmiths, taverns, playhouses, satires, epigrams, puns—these all came in on the town part, and the thither side of innocence. Man found out inventions. From my den I return you condolence for your decaying sight; not for anything there is to see in the country, but for the miss of the pleasure of reading a Lon-

don newspaper. The poets are as well to listen to; anything high may, nay, must, be read out; you read it to yourself with an imaginary auditor; but the light paragraphs must be glid over by the proper eye; mouthing mumbles their gossamery substance. 'Tis these trifles I should mourn in fading sight. A newspaper is the single gleam of comfort I receive here; it comes from rich Cathay with tidings of mankind. Yet I could not attend to it, read out by the most beloved voice. But your eyes do not get worse, I gather. Oh for the collyrium of Tobias enclosed in a whiting's liver, to send you with no apocryphal good wishes! The last long time I heard from you you had knocked your head against something. Do not do so; for your head (I do not flatter) is not a nob, or the top of a brass nail, or the end of a ninepin—unless a Vulcanian hammer could fairly batter a 'Recluse' out of it; then would I bid the smirched god knock and knock lustily, the two-handed skinker. Mary must squeeze out a line *propriâ manu;* but, indeed, her fingers have been incorrigibly nervous to letter-writing for a long interval. 'Twill please you all to hear, that though I fret like a lion in a net, her present health and spirits are better than they have been for some time past; she is absolutely three years and a half younger, as I tell her, since we have adopted this boarding plan.

"Our providers are an honest pair, Dame W—— and her husband; he, when the light of prosperity shined on them, a moderately thriving haberdasher within Bow bells, retired since with something under a competence; writes himself gentleman; hath borne parish offices; sings fine old sea songs at threescore and ten; sighs only now and then when he thinks that he has a son on his hands about fifteen, whom he finds a difficulty in getting out into the world, and then checks a sigh with muttering, as I once heard him prettily, not meaning to be heard, 'I have married my daughter, however;' takes the weather as it comes; outsides it to town in severest season; and o' winter nights tells old stories not tending to literature (how comfortable to author-rid folks!) and has *one anecdote*, upon which and about forty pounds a year he seems to have retired in green old age. It was how he was a rider in his youth, travelling for shops, and once (not to balk his employer's bargain), on a sweltering day in August, rode foaming into Dunstable upon a mad horse, to the dismay and expostulatory wonderment of innkeepers, ostlers, &c., who declared they would not have bestrid the beast to win the Derby. Understand, the creature galled to death and desperation by gadflies, cormorant-winged, worse than beset Inachus's daughter. This he tells, this he brindles and burnishes on a win-

ter's eve; 'tis his star of set glory, his rejuveniscence, to descant upon. Far from me be it (*dii avertant*) to look a gift story in the mouth, or cruelly to surmise (as those who doubt the plunge of Curtius) that the inseparate conjuncture of man and beast, the centaur-phenomenon that staggered all Dunstable, might have been the effect of unromantic necessity; that the horsepart carried the reasoning, willy nilly; that needs must when such a devil drove; that certain spiral configurations in the frame of T—— W——, unfriendly to alighting, made the alliance more forcible than voluntary. Let him enjoy his fame for me, nor let me hint a whisper that shall dismount Bellerophon. But in case he was an involuntary martyr, yet if in the fiery conflict he buckled the soul of a constant haberdasher to him, and adopted his flames, let accident and he share the glory. You would all like T—— W——. *[ ] How weak is painting to describe a man! Say that he stands four feet and a nail high by his own yard measure, which, like the sceptre of Agamemnon, shall never sprout again, still you have no adequate idea; nor when I tell you that his dear hump, which I have favoured in the picture, seems to me of the buffalo—indicative and repository of mild qualities, a budget of kindnesses—still you have not the man. Knew you old Norris of the Temple? sixty years ours and our fathers' friend? He was not more natural to us than this old W., the acquaintance of scarce more weeks. Under his roof now ought I to take my rest, but that back-looking ambition tells me I might yet be a Londoner! Well, if we ever do move, we have encumbrances the less to impede us; all our furniture has faded under the auctioneer's hammer, going for nothing like the tarnished frippery of the prodigal, and we have only a spoon or two left to bless us. Clothed we came into Enfield, and naked we must go out of it. I would live in London shirtless, bookless. Henry Crabb is at Rome; advices to that effect have reached Bury. But by solemn legacy he bequeathed at parting (whether he should live or die) a turkey of Suffolk to be sent every succeeding Christmas to us and divers other friends. What a genuine old bachelor's action! I fear he will find the air of Italy too classic. His station is in the Harz forest; his soul is be-Göethed. Miss Kelly we never see; Talfourd not this half year; the latter flourishes, but the exact number of his children, God forgive me, I have utterly forgotten; we single people are often out in our count there. Shall I say two? We see scarce anybody. Can I cram loves enough to you all in this little O? Excuse particularizing. C. L."

* Here was a rude sketch of a gentleman answering to the description.

A letter which, addressed to Mr. Gilman, was intended both for him and his great guest Coleridge, gives another version of the same character. "One anecdote" of T—— W—— is repeated in it, with the substitution of Devizes for Dunstable. Which is the veritable place must remain a curious question for future descant, as the hero is dead, and his anecdote survives alone in these pages. It seems that Miss Lamb had accompanied his landlord on a little excursion.

TO MR. GILMAN.

"Dear G.—The excursionists reached home and the good town of Enfield a little after four, without slip or dislocation. Little has transpired concerning the events of the back journey, save that of passing the house of Squire Mellish, situate a stone bow's cast from the hamlet. Father W——, with a good-natured wonderment, exclaimed, 'I cannot think what is gone of Mr. Mellish's rooks. I fancy they have taken flight somewhere, but I have missed them two or three years past.' All this while, according to his fellow-traveller's report, the rookery was darkening the air above with undiminished population, and deafening all ears but his with their cawings. But nature has been gently withdrawing such phenomena from the notice of two of T—— W——'s senses, from the time he began to miss the rooks. T. W—— has passed a retired life in this hamlet of thirty or forty years, living upon the minimum which is consistent with gentility, yet a star among the minor gentry, receiving the bows of the tradespeople and courtesies of the almswomen daily. Children venerate him not less for his external show of gentry than they wonder at him for a gentle rising endorsation of the person, not amounting to a hump, or if a hump, innocuous as the hump of the buffalo, and coronative of as mild qualities. 'Tis a throne on which patience seems to sit—the proud perch of a self-respecting humility, stooping with condescension. Thereupon the cares of life have sat, and rid him easily. For he has thrid the *angustiæ domûs* with dexterity. Life opened upon him with comparative brilliancy. He set out a rider or traveller for a wholesale house, in which capacity he tells of many hair-breadth escapes that befell him; one especially, how he rode a mad horse into the town of Devizes; how horse and rider arrived in a foam, to the utter consternation of the expostulating hostlers, innkeepers, &c. It seems it was sultry weather, piping hot; the steed tormented into phrensy with gadflies, long past being roadworthy; but safety and the interest of the house he rode for were incompatible things; a fall in serge cloth was expected, and a mad entrance they made of it.

Whether the exploit was purely voluntary, or partially; or whether a certain personal disfiguration in the man-part of this extraordinary centaur (nonassistive to partition of natures) might not enforce the conjunction, I stand not to inquire. I look not with 'skew eyes into the deeds of heroes. The hosier that was burnt with his shop in Field-lane, on Tuesday night, shall have passed to heaven for me like a Marian martyr, provided always that he consecrated the fortuitous incremation with a short ejaculation in the exit, as much as if he had taken his state degrees of martyrdom *in formâ* in the market vicinage. There is adoptive as well as acquisitive sacrifice. Be the animus what it might, the fact is indisputable, that this composition was seen flying all abroad, and mine host of Daintry may yet remember its passing through his town, if his scores are not more faithful than his memory. After this exploit (enough for one man), T—— W—— seems to have subsided into a less hazardous occupation; and in the twenty-fifth year of his age we find him a haberdasher in Bow-lane; yet still retentive of his early riding (though leaving it to rawer stomachs), and Christmasly at night sithence to this last, and to his latest Christmas, hath he, doth he, and shall he, tell after supper the story of the insane steed and the desperate rider. Save for Bedlam or Luke's, no eye could have guessed that melting day what house he rid for. But he reposes on his bridles, and after the ups and downs (metaphoric only) of a life behind the counter—hard riding sometimes, I fear, for poor T. W.—with the scrapings together of the shop, and *one anecdote*, he hath finally settled at Enfield; by hard economizing, gardening, building for himself, hath reared a mansion; married a daughter; qualified a son for a counting-house; gotten the respect of high and low; served for self or substitute the greater parish offices; hath a special voice at vestries; and, domiciliating us, hath reflected a portion of his housekeeping respectability upon your humble servants. We are greater, being his lodgers, than when we were substantial renters. His name is a passport to take off the sneers of the native Enfielders against obnoxious foreigners. We are endenizened. Thus much of T. W—— have I thought fit to acquaint you, that you may see the exemplary reliance upon Providence with which I intrusted so dear a charge as my own sister to the guidance of the man that rode the mad horse into Devizes. To come from his heroic character, all the amiable qualities of domestic life concentre in this tamed Bellerophon. He is excellent over a glass of grog; just as pleasant without it; laughs when he hears a joke and when (which is much oftener) he hears it not; sings glorious old sea songs on fes-

tival nights; and but upon a slight acquaintance of two years, Coleridge is as dear a deaf old man to us as old Norris, rest his soul! was after fifty. To him and his scanty literature (what there is of it, *sound*) have we flown from the metropolis and its cursed annualists, reviewers, authors, and the whole muddy ink press of that stagnant pool.

"Now, Gilman again, you do not know the treasures of the Fullers. I calculate on having massy reading till Christmas. All I want here is books of the true sort, not those things in boards that moderns mistake for books, what they club for at book-clubs.

"I did not mean to cheat you with a blank side, but my eye smarts, for which I am taking medicine, and abstain, this day at least, from any aliments but milk porridge, the innocent taste of which I am anxious to renew after a half century's disacquaintance. If a blot fall here like a tear, it is not pathos, but an angry eye.

"Farewell, while my *specilla* are sound.

"Yours, and yours,

"C. LAMB."

The next letter to Coleridge's excellent host is a reply to a request from an importunate friend of his correspondent, that he would write something on behalf of the Spitalfields' weavers. Alien as such a task would have been to his habits of thought or composition, if Lamb had been acquainted with that singular race, living in their high, narrow, overpeopled houses, in the thickest part of London, yet almost apart from the great throng of its dwellers; indulging their straitened sympathies in the fostering of the more tender animals, as rabbits and pigeons, nurtured in their garrets or cellars; or cultivating some stunted plants with an intuitive love of nature, unfed by any knowledge of verdure beyond Hoxton; their painful industry, their uneducated morals, their eager snatches of pleasure from the only quickening of their intellect, by liquors, which make glad the heart of man; he would scarcely have refused the offered retainer for them.

TO MR. GILMAN.

"My dear G.—Your friend B—— (for I knew him immediately by the smooth satinity of his style) must excuse me for advocating the cause of his friends in Spitalfields. The fact is, I am retained by the Norwich people, and have already appeared in their paper under the signatures of 'Lucius Sergius,' 'Bluff,' 'Broadcloth,' 'No-Trade-to-the-Woollen-Trade,' 'Anti-Plush,' &c., in defence of druggets and long

camlets. And without this pre-engagement, I feel I should naturally have chosen a side opposite to ——, for in the silken seemingness of his nature there is that which offends me. My flesh tingles at such caterpillars. He shall not crawl me over. Let him and his workmen sing the old burden,

'Heighho, ye weavers!'

for any aid I shall offer them in this emergency. I was over Saint Luke's the other day with my friend Tuthill, and mightily pleased with one of his contrivances for the comfort and amelioration of the students. They have double cells, in which a pair may lie feet to feet horizontally, and chat the time away as rationally as they can. It must certainly be more sociable for them these warm raving nights. The right-hand truckle in one of these friendly recesses, at present vacant, was preparing, I understood, for Mr. Irving. Poor fellow! it is time he removed from Pentonville. I followed him as far as to Highbury the other day, with a mob at his heels, calling out upon Ermigiddon, who, I suppose, is some Scotch moderator. He squinted out his favourite eye last Friday, in the fury of possession, upon a poor woman's shoulders that was crying matches, and has not missed it. The companion truck, as far as I could measure it with my eye, would conveniently fit a person about the length of Coleridge, allowing for a reasonable drawing up of the feet, not at all painful. Does he talk of moving this quarter? You and I have too much sense to trouble ourselves with revelations; marry, to the same in Greek, you may have something professionally to say. Tell C. that he was to come and see us some fine day. Let it be before he moves, for in his new quarters he will necessarily be confined in his conversation to his brother prophet. Conceive the two rabbis foot to foot, for there are no Gamaliels there to affect a humbler posture! All are masters in that Patmos, where the law is perfect equality; Latmos, I should rather say, for they will be Luna's twin darlings; her affection will be ever at the full. Well, keep *your* brains moist with gooseberry this mad March, for the devil of exposition seeketh dry places.

"C. L."

Here is a brief reply to the questioning of Lamb's true-hearted correspondent, Barton, who doubted of the personal verity of Lamb's "Joseph Paice," the most polite of the old Templars. This friend's personal acquaintance with Lamb had not been frequent enough to teach him, that if Lamb could innocently "lie like truth," he made up for this free-

dom by sometimes making truth look like a lie. His account of Mr. Paice's politeness could be attested to the letter by living witnesses.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"Dear B. B.—To reply to you by return of post, I must gobble up my dinner, and despatch this in *propriâ personâ* to the office to be in time. So take it from me hastily, that you are perfectly welcome to furnish A. C. with the scrap, which I had almost forgotten writing. The more my character comes to be known, the less my veracity will come to be suspected. Time every day clears up some suspected narrative of Herodotus, Bruce, and others of us great travellers. Why, that Joseph Paice was as real a person as Joseph Hume, and a great deal pleasanter. A careful observer of life, Bernard, has no need to invent. Nature romances it for him. Dinner-plates rattle, and I positively shall incur indigestion by carrying it half concocted to the posthouse. Let me congratulate you on the spring coming in, and do you, in return, condole with me on the winter going out. When the old one goes, seldom comes a better. I dread the prospect of summer, with his all day-long days. No need of his assistance to make country-places dull. With fire and candlelight, I can dream myself in Holborn; with lightsome skies shining in to bedtime, I cannot. This is Meschek, and these are the tents of Kedar. I would dwell in the skirts of Jericho rather, and think every blast of the coming in mail a ram's-horn. Give me old London at fire and plague time, rather than these tepid gales, healthy country airs, and purposeless exercise.

"Leg of mutton absolutely on the table.

"Take our hasty loves and a short farewell.

"C. L."

A rural conflagration at this time kindled the noblest range of Lamb's thoughts, which he expressed in the following letter. The light he flashes on the strange power exerted by the half-witted incendiary shows in it something of a fearful grandeur. It is addressed

TO MR. DYER.

"Dear Dyer—I should have written before to thank you for your kind letter, written with your own hand. It glads me to see your writing. It will give you pleasure to hear that, after so much illness, we are in tolerable health and spirits once more. Poor Enfield, that has been so peaceful hitherto, has caught the inflammatory fever; the tokens are upon her; and a

great fire was blazing last night in the barns and haystacks of a farmer about half a mile from us. Where will these things end? There is no doubt of its being the work of some ill-disposed rustic, but how is he to be discovered? They go to work in the dark with strange chymical preparations, unknown to our forefathers. There is not even a dark lantern, to have a chance of detecting these Guy Fauxes. We are past the iron age, and are got into the fiery age, undreamed of by Ovid. You are lucky in Clifford's Inn, where I think you have few ricks or stacks worth the burning. Pray keep as little corn by you as you can, for fear of the worst. It was never good times in England since the poor began to speculate upon their condition. Formerly they jogged on with as little reflection as horses. The whistling ploughman went cheek by jowl with his brother that neighed. Now the biped carries a box of phosphorus in his leather breeches, and in the dead of night the half-illuminated beast steals his magic potion into a cleft in the barn, and half the country is grinning with new fires. Farmer Graystock said something to the touchy rustic that he did not relish, and he writes his distaste in flames. What a power to intoxicate his rude brains, just muddlingly awake to perceive that something is wrong in the social system—what a hellish faculty above gunpowder! Now the rich and poor are fairly pitted. We shall see who can hang or burn the fastest. It is not always revenge that stimulates these kindlings. There is a love of exciting mischief! Think of a disrespected clod, that was trod into earth; that was nothing; on a sudden, by damned arts, refined into an exterminating angel, devouring the fruits of the earth and their growers in a mass of fire; what a new existence! What a temptation above Lucifer's! Why, here was a spectacle last night for a whole country, a bonfire visible to London, alarming her guilty towers, and shaking the monument with an ague fit, all done by a little vial of phosphor in a clown's fob. How he must grin and shake his empty noddle in clouds! The Vulcanian epicure! Alas! can we ring the bells backward? Can we unlearn the arts that pretend to civilize, and then burn the world? There is a march of science; but who shall beat the drums for its retreat? Who shall persuade the boor that phosphor will not ignite? Seven goodly stacks of hay, with corn-barns proportionable, lie smoking ashes and chaff, which man and beast would sputter out and reject like those apples of asphaltes and bitumen. The food for the inhabitants of earth will quickly disappear. Hot rolls may say, Fuimus panes, fuit quartern-loaf, et ingens gloria apple-pasty-orum. That the good old munching system may last thy time and

mine, good un-incendiary George! is the devout prayer of thine,

"To the last crust,
"C. LAMB."

Lamb's kindness to Hone was not confined to his contributions to the "Every-day Book" and the "Table Book." Those pleasant and blameless works had failed to supply an adequate income to a numerous family, and Lamb was desirous of interesting his influential friends in a new project of Hone's, to establish himself in a coffee-house conducted in a superior style. With this view he wrote to Southey, who, nobly forgetting Hone's old heresies in politics or parodies, had made a genial reference to his late work in his "Life of Bunyan."

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

"Dear Southey—My friend Hone, whom you would like *for a friend*, I found deeply impressed with your generous notice of him in your beautiful 'Life of Bunyan,' which I am just now full of. He has written to you for leave to publish a certain good-natured letter. I write not this to enforce his request, for we are fully aware that the refusal of such publication would be quite consistent with all that is good in your character. Neither he nor I expect it from you, nor exact it; but if you would consent to it, you would have me obliged by it as well as him. What right I have to interfere you best know. Look on me as a dog who went once temporarily insane, and bit you, and now begs for a crust. Will you set your wits to a dog?

"Our object is to open a subscription, which my friends of the —— are most willing to forward him, but think that a leave from you to publish would aid it.

"But not an atom of respect or kindness will or shall abate in either of us if you decline it. Have this strongly in your mind.

"Those 'Every-day' and 'Table' Books will be a treasure a hundred years hence, but they have failed to make Hone's fortune.

"Here his wife and all his children are about me, gaping for coffee customers; but how should they come in, seeing no pot boiling!

"Enough of Hone. I saw Coleridge a day or two since. He has had some severe attack, not paralytic; but, if I had not heard of it, I should not have found it out. He looks, and especially speaks, strong. How are all the Wordsworths,

and all the Southeys, whom I am obliged to you if you have not brought up haters of the name of

"C. LAMB.

"P.S.—I have gone lately into the acrostic line. I find genius (such as I had) declines with me, but I get clever. Do you know anybody that wants charades or such things for albums? I do 'em at so much a sheet. Perhaps an epigram (not a very happy-gram) I did for a schoolboy yesterday may amuse. I pray Jove he may not get a flogging for any false quantity; but 'tis, with one exception, the only Latin verses I have made for forty years, and I did it 'to order.'

CUIQUE SUUM.

Adsciscit sibi divitias et opes alienas
Fur, rapiens, spolians, quod mihi, quod-que tibi,
Proprium erat, temnens hæc verba, meum-que, tuum-que;
Omne suum est: tandem Cui-que Suum tribuit.
Dat vesti collum; restes, vah! carnifici dat;
Se se Diabolo, sic bene; Cuique Suum.

"I write from Hone's, therefore Mary cannot send her love to Mrs. Southey, but I do.

"Yours ever,
"C. L."

In 1830 Lamb took a journey to Bury St. Edmund's, to fetch Miss Isola to her adopted home, from a visit which had been broken by her illness. It was on his return that Lamb's repartee to the query of the statistical gentleman as to the prospects of the turnip crop, which has been repeatedly published, was made. The following is his own version of it, contained in a letter addressed to Miss Isola's hostess on their arrival.

"A rather talkative gentleman, but very civil, engaged me in a discourse for full twenty miles on the probable advantages of steam carriages, which, being merely problematical, I bore my part in with some credit, in spite of my totally un-engineer-like faculties. But when, somewhere about Stanstead, he put an unfortunate question to me as to the 'probability of its turning out a good turnip season,' and when I, who am still less of an agriculturist than a steam philosopher, not knowing a turnip from a potato ground, innocently made answer that 'I believed it depended very much upon boiled legs of mutton,' my unlucky reply set Miss Isola a laughing to a degree that disturbed her tranquillity for the only moment in our journey. I am afraid my credit sank very low with my other fellow-traveller, who had thought he had met with a well-informed

passenger, which is an accident so desirable in a stagecoach. We were rather less communicative, but still friendly, the rest of the way."

To the same lady, having sent him an acrostic on his sister's name, he replied with a letter which contained one on hers, and the following notice of his own talent in the acrostic line.

"Dear Madam—I do assure you that your verses gratified me very much, and my sister is quite *proud* of them. For the first time in my life I congratulated myself upon the shortness and meanness of my name. Had it been for Schwartzenberg or Esterhazy, it would have put you to some puzzle. I am afraid I shall sicken you of acrostics, but this last was written *to order*. I beg you to have inserted in your county paper something like this advertisement. 'To the nobility, gentry, and others about Bury. C. Lamb respectfully informs his friends and the public in general, that he is leaving off business in the acrostic line, as he is going into an entirely new line. Rebuses and charades done as usual, and upon the old terms. Also, epitaphs to suit the memory of any person deceased.'

"I thought I had adroitly escaped the rather unpliable name of 'Williams' curtailing your poor daughter's verses to her proper surnames, but it seems you would not let me off so easily. If these trifles amuse you, I am paid. Though really 'tis an operation so much like—'A, apple-pie; B, bit it.' To make amends, I request leave to lend you the 'Excursion,' and to recommend, in particular, the 'Churchyard Stories;' in the seventh book, I think. They will strengthen the tone of your mind after its weak diet on acrostics."

* * * * * *

In 1830 a small volume of poems, the gleanings of some years, during which Lamb had devoted himself to prose, under his name of "Elia," was published by Mr. Moxon, under the title of "Album Verses," and which Lamb, in token of his strong regard, dedicated to the publisher. An unfavourable review of them in the Literary Gazette produced some verses from Southey, which were inserted in the Times, and of which the following, as evincing his unchanged friendship, may not unfitly be inserted here. The residue, being more severe on Lamb's critics than Lamb himself would have wished, may now be spared.

Charles Lamb, to those who know thee justly dear
For rarest genius, and for sterling worth,
Unchanging friendship, warmth of heart sincere,
And wit that never gave an ill thought birth,

Nor ever in its sport infix'd a sting;
To us, who have admired and loved thee long,
It is a proud as well as pleasant thing
To hear thy good report, now borne along
Upon the honest breath of public praise:
We know that, with the elder sons of song,
In honouring whom thou hast delighted still,
Thy name shall keep its course to after days.

This year closed upon the grave of Hazlitt. Lamb visited him frequently during his last illness, and attended his funeral. They had taken great delight in each other's conversation for many years; and though the indifference of Lamb to the objects of Hazlitt's passionate love or hatred, as a politician, at one time produced a coolness, the warmth of the defence of Hazlitt in "Elia's Letter to Southey" renewed the old regard of the philosopher, and set all to rights. Hazlitt, in his turn, as an Edinburgh Reviewer, had opportunities which he delighted to use, of alluding to Lamb's Specimens and Essays, and making him amends for the severity of ancient criticism, which the editor, who could well afford the genial inconsistency, was too generous to exclude. The conduct, indeed, of that distinguished person to Hazlitt, especially in his last illness, won Lamb's admiration, and wholly effaced the recollection of the time when, thirty years before, his play had been denied critical mercy under his rule. Hazlitt's death did not so much shock Lamb at the time, as it weighed down his spirits afterward, when he felt the want of those essays which he had used periodically to look for with eagerness in the magazines and reviews, which they alone made tolerable to him; and when he realized the dismal certainty that he should never again enjoy that rich discourse of old poets and painters with which so many a long winter's night had been gladdened, or taste life with an additional relish in the keen sense of enjoyment which endeared it to his companion.

CHAPTER XVIII.

[1830 to 1834.]

Lamb's last Letters and Death.

After the year 1830 Lamb's verses and essays were chiefly given to his friends; the former consisting of album contributions, the latter of little essences of observation and criticism. Mr. Moxon, having established a new magazine, called the

"Englishman's Magazine," induced him to write a series of papers, some of which were not inferior to his happiest essays. At this time his old and excellent friend, Dyer, was much annoyed by some of his witticisms—which, in truth, were only Lamb's modes of expressing his deep-seated regard; and at the quotation of a couplet in one of his early poems, which he had suppressed as liable to be misconstrued by Mr. Rogers. Mr. Barker had unfortunately met with the unexpurgated edition which contained this dubious couplet, and in his "Memorials of Dr. Parr" quoted the passage; which, to Mr. Dyer's delicate feelings,* conveyed the apprehension that Mr. Rogers would treat the suppression as colourable, and refer the revival of the lines to his sanction. The following letter was written to dispel those fears from his mind.

TO MR. DYER.

"Dear Dyer—Mr. Rogers and Mr. Rogers's friends are perfectly assured that you never intended any harm by an innocent couplet, and that in the revivification of it by blundering Barker you had no hand whatever. To imagine that, at this time of day, Rogers broods over a fantastic expression of more than thirty years' standing, would be to suppose him indulging his 'pleasures of memory' with a vengeance. You never penned a line which for its own sake you need, dying, wish to blot. You mistake your heart if you think you *can* write a lampoon. Your whips are rods of roses. Your spleen has ever had for its object vices, not the vicious; abstract offences, not the concrete sinner. But you are sensitive, and wince as much at the consciousness of having committed a compliment as another man would at the perpetration of an affront. But do not lug me into the same soreness of conscience with yourself. I maintain, and will to the last hour, that I never writ of you but con amore. That if any allusion was made

* Mr. Dyer also complained to Mr. Lamb of some suggestions in Elia, which annoyed him, not so much for his own sake as for the sake of others who, in the delicacy of his apprehensiveness, he thought might feel aggrieved by imputations which were certainly not intended, and which they did not deserve. One passage in Elia, hinting that he had been hardly dealt with by schoolmasters, under whom he had been a teacher in his younger days, hurt him; as, in fact, he was treated by them with the most considerate generosity and kindness. Another passage which he regarded as implying that he had been underpaid by booksellers also vexed him; as his labours have always been highly esteemed, and have, according to the rate of remuneration of learned men, been well compensated by Mr. Valpy and others. The truth is, that Lamb wrote from a vague recollection, without intending any personal reference at all to Mr. Dyer himself, and only seeking to illustrate the pure, simple, and elevated character of a man of letters, "unspotted from the world." Probably no one has ever applied these suggestions to the parties for whose reputation Mr. Dyer has been so honourably anxious but himself; but it is due to his feelings to state that they are founded in error.

to your near-sightedness, it was not for the purpose of mocking an infirmity, but of connecting it with scholar-like habits; for, is it not erudite and scholarly to be somewhat near of sight before age naturally brings on the malady? You could not then plead the obrepens senectus. Did I not, moreover, make it an apology for a certain *absence*, which some of your friends may have experienced when you have not on a sudden made recognition of them in a casual street-meeting? And did I not strengthen your excuse for this slowness of recognition by further accounting morally for the present engagement of your mind in worthy objects? Did I not, in your person, make the handsomest apology for absent-of-mind people that was ever made? If these things be not so, I never knew what I wrote or meant by my writing, and have been penning libels all my life without being aware of it. Does it follow that I should have expressed myself exactly in the same way of those dear old eyes of yours *now*, now that Father Time has conspired with a hard taskmaster to put a last extinguisher upon them? I should as soon have insulted the Answerer of Salmasius, when he awoke up from his ended task, and saw no more with mortal vision. But you are many films removed yet from Milton's calamity. You write perfectly intelligibly. Marry, the letters are not all of the same size or tallness; but that only shows your proficiency in the *hands*, text, German-hand, court-hand, sometimes law-hand, and affords variety. You pen better than you did a twelvemonth ago; and if you continue to improve, you bid fair to win the golden pen which is the prize at your young gentlemen's academy. But you must be aware of Valpy and his printing-house, that hazy cave of Trophonius, out of which it was a mercy that you escaped with a glimmer. Beware of MSS. and Variæ Lectiones. Settle the text for once in your mind, and stick to it. You have some years' good sight in you yet if you do not tamper with it. It is not for you (for *us* I should say) to go poring into Greek contractions, and stargazing upon slim Hebrew points. We have yet the sight

> Of sun, and moon, and star throughout the year,
> And man and woman.

You have vision enough to discern Mrs. Dyer from the other comely gentlewoman who lives up at staircase No. 5; or, if you should make a blunder in the twilight, Mrs. Dyer has too much good sense to be jealous for a mere effect of imperfect optics. But don't try to write the Lord's Prayer, Creed, and Ten Commandments in the compass of a halfpenny; nor run after a midge or a mote to catch it, and leave off hunting for needles in bushels of hay, for all these things strain the eyes.

The snow is six feet deep in some parts here. I must put on jack-boots to get at the postoffice with this. It is not good for weak eyes to pore upon snow too much. It lies in drifts. I wonder what its drift is; only that it makes good pancakes, remind Mrs. Dyer. It turns a pretty green world into a white one. It glares too much for an innocent colour, methinks. I wonder why you think I dislike gilt edges. They set off a letter marvellously. Yours, for instance, looks for all the world like a tablet of curious *hieroglyphics* in a gold frame. But don't go and lay this to your eyes. You always wrote hieroglyphically, yet not to come up to the mystical notations and conjuring characters of Doctor Parr. You never wrote what I call a schoolmaster's hand, like C——; nor a woman's hand, like S——; nor a Missal hand, like Porson; nor an all-of-the-wrong-side sloping hand, like Miss H——; nor a dogmatic, Mede-and-Persian, peremptory hand, like R——; but you ever wrote what I call a Grecian's hand; what the Grecians write (or used) at Christ's Hospital; such as Whalley would have admired, and Boyer have applauded, but Smith or Atwood (writing-masters) would have horsed you for. Your boy-of-genius hand and your mercantile hand are various. By your flourishes, I should think you never learned to make eagles, or corkscrews, or flourish the governors' names in the writing-school; and, by the tenour and cut of your letters, I suspect you were never in it at all. By the length of this scrawl you will think I have a design on your optics; but I have writ as large as I could, out of respect to them; too large, indeed, for beauty. Mine is a sort of deputy Grecian's hand; a little better, and more of a worldly hand than a Grecian's, but still remote from the mercantile. I don't know how it is, but I keep my rank in fancy still since schooldays. I can never forget I was a deputy Grecian! And writing to you, or to Coleridge, besides affection, I feel a reverential deference as to Grecians still. I keep my soaring way above the Great Erasmians, yet far beneath the other. Alas! what am I now? what is a Leadenhall clerk or India pensioner to a deputy Grecian? How art thou fallen, oh Lucifer! Just room for our loves to Mrs. D., &c.

"C. LAMB."

The following letter is

TO MR. CAREY.

"Assidens est mihi bona soror, Euripiden evolvens, donum vestrum, carissime Carey, pro quo gratias agimus, lecturi atque iterum lecturi idem. Pergratus est liber ambobus, nempe

'Sacerdotis Commiserationis,' sacrum opus a te ipso Humanissimæ Religionis Sacerdote dono datum. Lachrymantes gavisuri sumus; est ubi dolor fiat voluptas; nec semper dulce mihi est ridere; aliquando commutandum est he! he! he! cum heu! heu! heu!

"A Musis Tragicis me non penitus abhorruisse testis sit Carmen Calamitosum, nescio quo autore linguâ prius vernaculâ scriptum, et nuperrimè a me ipso Latine versum, scilicet; 'Tom Tom of Islington.' Tenuistine?

'Thomas Thomas de Islington,
Uxorem duxit Die quâdam Solis,
Abduxit domum sequenti die,
Emit baculum subsequenti,
Vapulat illa posterâ,
Ægrotat succedenti, Mortua fit crastinâ.'

Et miro gaudio afficitur Thomas luce posterâ quod subsequenti (nempe, Dominicâ) uxor sit efferenda.

'En Iliades Domesticas!
En circulum calamitatum!
Planè hebdomadalem tragœdiam.'

I nunc et confer Euripiden vestram his luctibus, hâc morte uxoriâ; confer Alcesten! Hecuben! quas non antiquas Heroinas Dolorosas.

"Suffundor genas lachrymis tantas strages revolvens. Quid restat nisi quod Tecum Tuam Caram salutamus ambosque valere jubeamus, nosmet ipsi bene valentes.

"ELIA.

"Datum ab agro Enfeldiensi, Maii die sextâ, 1831."

The death of Munden reviving his recollections of "the veteran comedian," called forth the following letter of 11th February, 1832, to the editor of the *Athenæum*, whom Lamb had, for a long time, numbered among his friends.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "ATHENÆUM."

"Dear Sir—Your communication to me of the death of Munden made me weep. Now, sir, I am not of the melting mood; but, in these serious times, the loss of half the world's fun is no trivial deprivation. It was my loss (or *gain* shall I call it) in the early time of my play-going, to have missed all Munden's acting. There was only he and Lewis at Covent Garden, while Drury Lane was exuberant with Parsons, Dodd, &c., such a comic company as, I suppose, the stage never showed. Thence, in the evening of my life I had Munden all to myself, more mellowed, richer, perhaps, than ever. I cannot say what his change of faces produced in me. It was not acting. He was not one of my 'old actors.' It might be

better. His power was extravagant. I saw him one evening in three drunken characters. Three farces were played. One part was *Dosey*—I forget the rest; but they were so discriminated that a stranger might have seen them all, and not have dreamed that he was seeing the same actor. I am jealous for the actors who pleased my youth. He was not a Parsons or a Dodd, but he was more wonderful. He seemed as if he could *do* anything. He was not an actor, but something *better*, if you please. Shall I instance *Old Foresight*, in 'Love for Love,' in which Parsons was at once the old man, the astrologer, &c. Munden dropped the old man, the doter—which makes the character—but he substituted for it a moon-struck character, a perfect abstraction from this earth, that looked as if he had newly come down from the planets. Now *that* is not what I call *acting*. It might be better. He was imaginative; he could impress upon an audience an *idea*—the low one, perhaps, of a leg of mutton and turnips; but such was the grandeur and singleness of his expressions, that that single expression would convey to all his auditory a notion of all the pleasures they had all received from all the legs of mutton *and turnips* they had ever eaten in their lives. Now this is not *acting*, nor do I set down Munden among my old actors. He was only a wonderful man, exerting his vivid impressions through the agency of the stage. In one only thing did I see him *act*—that is, support a character; it was in a wretched farce, called 'Johnny Gilpin,' for Dowton's benefit, in which he did a cockney. The thing ran but one night; but when I say that Liston's *Lubin Log* was nothing to it, I say little; it was transcendent. And here let me say of actors, *envious* actors, that of *Munden*, Liston was used to speak, almost with the enthusiasm due to the dead, in terms of such allowed superiority to every actor on the stage, and this at a time when Munden was gone by in the world's estimation, that it convinced me that artists (in which term I include poets, painters, &c.) are not so envious as the world think. I have little time, and therefore enclose a criticism on Munden's *Old Dosey* and his general acting,* by a friend.

"C. LAMB."

"Mr. Munden appears to us to be the most *classical* of actors. He is that in high farce which Kemble was in high tragedy. The lines of these great artists are, it must be admitted, sufficiently distinct; but the same elements are in both—the same directness of purpose, the same singleness of

* A little article inserted in "The Champion" before Lamb wrote his essay on the Acting of Munden. Lamb's repetition may cast on it sufficient interest to excuse its repetition here.

aim, the concentration of power, the same iron-casing of inflexible manner, the same statue-like precision of gesture, movement, and attitude. The hero of farce is as little affected with impulses from without as the retired Prince of Tragedians. There is something solid, sterling, almost adamantine, in the building up of his most grotesque characters. When he fixes his wonder-working face in any of its most amazing varieties, it looks as if the picture were carved out from a rock by Nature in a sportive vein, and might last for ever. It is like what we can imagine a mask of the old Grecian comedy to have been, only that it lives, and breathes, and changes. His most fantastical gestures are the grand ideal of farce. He seems as though he belonged to the earliest and the stateliest age of comedy, when, instead of superficial foibles and the airy varieties of fashion, she had the grand asperities of man to work on, when her grotesque images had something romantic about them, and when humour and parody were themselves heroic. His expressions of feeling and bursts of enthusiasm are among the most genuine which we have ever felt. They seem to come up from a depth of emotion in the heart, and burst through the sturdy casing of manner with a strength which seems increased tenfold by its real and hearty obstacle. The workings of his spirit seem to expand his frame, till we can scarcely believe that by measure it is small; for the space which he fills in the imagination is so real, that we almost mistake it for that of corporeal dimensions. His *Old Dosey*, in the excellent farce of 'Past Ten o'Clock,' is his grandest effort of this kind, and we know of nothing finer. He seems to have a 'heart of oak' indeed. His description of a seafight is the most noble and triumphant piece of enthusiasm which we remember. It is as if the spirits of a whole crew of nameless heroes 'were swelling in his bosom.' We never felt so ardent and proud a sympathy with the valour of England as when we heard it. May health long be his, thus to do our hearts good—for we never saw any actor whose merits have the least resemblance to his even in species: and when his genius is withdrawn from the stage, we shall not have left even a term by which we can fitly describe it."

Coleridge, now in declining health, seems to have feared, from a long intermission of Lamb's visits to Highgate, that there was some estrangement between them, and to have written to Lamb under that fear. The following note shows how much he was mistaken.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"April 14, 1832.

"My dear Coleridge—Not an unkind thought has passed in my brain about you. But I have been wofully neglectful of you, so that I do not deserve to announce to you, that if I do not hear from you before then, I will set out on Wednesday morning to take you by the hand. I would do it this moment, but an unexpected visit might flurry you. I shall take silence for acquiescence, and come. I am glad you could write so long a letter. Old loves to, and hope of kind looks from, the Gilmans when I come.

"Yours, *semper idem*,

"C. L.

"If you ever thought an offence, much more wrote it, against me, it must have been in the times of Noah, and the great waters swept it away. Mary's most kind love, and may be a wrong prophet of your bodings!—here she is crying for mere love over your letter. I wring out less, but not sincerer showers.

"My direction is simply Enfield."

Lamb's regard for Mr. Carey had now ripened into a fast friendship; and, by agreement, he dined every third Wednesday in the month at the Museum. In general, these were occasions on which Lamb observed the strictest rules of temperance; but once accident of stomach or of sentiment caused a woful deviation, which Lamb deplored in the following letter.

TO MR. CAREY.

"I protest I know not in what words to invest my sense of the shameful violation of hospitality which I was guilty of on that fatal Wednesday. Let it be blotted from the calendar. Had it been committed at a layman's house, say a merchant's, or a manufacturer's, a cheesemonger's, or green-grocer's, or, to go higher, a barrister's, a member of parliament's, a rich banker's, I should have felt alleviation, a drop of self-pity. But to be seen deliberately to go out of the house of a clergyman drunk! a clergyman of the Church of England too! not that alone, but of an expounder of that dark Italian Hierophant, an exposition little short of *his* who dared unfold the Apocalypse; divine riddles both; and, without supernal grace vouchsafed, arks not to be fingered without present blasting to the touchers. And then, from what house! Not a common glebe, or vicarage (which yet had been shameful), but from a kingly repository of sciences, human and divine, with

the Primate of England for its guardian, arrayed in public majesty, from which the profane vulgar are bid fly. Could all those volumes have taught me nothing better? With feverish eyes on the succeeding dawn I opened upon the faint light, enough to distinguish, in a strange chamber, not immediately to be recognised, garters, hose, waistcoat, neckerchief, arranged in dreadful order and proportion, which I knew was not mine own. 'Tis the common symptom, on awaking, I judge my last night's condition from. A tolerable scattering on the floor I hail as being too probably my own, and if the candlestick be not removed, I assoil myself. But this finical arrangement, this finding everything in the morning in exact diametrical rectitude, torments me. Remote whispers suggested that I *coached* it home in triumph. Far be that from working pride in me, for I was unconscious of the locomotion. That a young Mentor accompanied a reprobate old Telemachus; that, the Trojan like, he bore his charge upon his shoulders, while the wretched incubus, in glimmering sense, hiccoughed drunken snatches of flying on the bats' wings after sunset. An aged servitor was also hinted at, to make disgrace more complete, one to whom my ignominy may offer further occasions of revolt (to which he was before too fondly inclining) from the true faith; for, at a sight of helplessness, what more was needed to drive him to the advocacy of independence? Occasion led me through Great Russel-street yesterday. I gazed at the great knocker. My feeble hands in vain essayed to lift it. I dreaded that Argus, who doubtless lanterned me out on that prodigious night. I called the Elginian marbles. They were cold to my suit. I shall never again, I said, on the wide gates unfolding, say, without fear of thrusting back, in a light but peremptory air, 'I am going to Mr. Carey's.' I passed by the walls of Balclutha. I had imaged to myself a zodiac of third Wednesdays irradiating by glimpses the Edmonton dulness. I dreamed of Highmore! I am de-vited to come on Wednesdays. Villanous old age, that, with second childhood, brings linked hand in hand her inseparable twin, new inexperience, which knows not effects of liquor. Where I was to have sat for a sober, middle-aged-and-a-half-gentleman, literary too, the neat fingered artist can educe no notions but of a dissoluted Silenus, lecturing natural philosophy to a jeering Chromius, or a Mnasilus. Pudet. From the context gather the lost name of ——."

In 1833 the choicest prose essays which Lamb had written since the publication of Elia were collected and published —as with a melancholy—under the title of "The last Es-

says of Elia," by Mr. Moxon. The work contains ample proof that the powers of the author had ripened rather than declined; for the paper called "Blakesmoor in H—shire," which imbodies his recollection of the old mansion in which his grandmother lived as housekeeper; those on Elliston, "Captain Jackson," and "The Old Margate Hoy," are among the most original, the least constrained, and the most richly coloured of his works. It was favourably noticed by almost all the principal critics—by many enthusiastically and sincerely praised; and an admirable notice in "The Quarterly" was published just after the foreboding of the title was fulfilled. His indisposition to write, however, increased; but in creating so much, excellent in its kind, so complete in itself, and so little tinged with alloy, he had, in truth, done enough, and had earned in literature, as in the drudgery of the desk, a right to repose. Yet, still ready to obey the call of friendship, he wrote both prologue and epilogue to Knowles's play of "The Wife;" the composition of which must have been mere labour, as they are only decently suited to the occasion, and have no mark or likelihood to repay the vanity of the poet.

Miss Isola's marriage, which left Lamb and his sister once more alone, induced them to draw a little nearer to their friends; and they fixed their abode in Church-street, Edmonton, within reach of the Enfield walks which custom had endeared to them. There with his sister he continued, regularly visiting London and dining with Mr. Carey on every third Wednesday. The following notelet is in answer to a letter enclosing a list of candidates for a widow's fund society for which he was entitled to vote.

TO MR. CAREY.

"Dear Sir—The unbounded range of munificence presented to my choice staggers me. What can twenty votes do for one hundred and two widows? I cast my eyes hopeless among the viduage. N.B. Southey* might be ashamed of himself to let his aged mother stand at the top of the list, with his 100*l.* a year and butt of sack. Sometimes I sigh over No. 12, Mrs. Carve-ill, some poor relation of mine, no doubt. No. 15 has my wishes, but then she is a Welsh one. I have Ruth upon No. 21. I'd tug hard for No. 24. No. 25 is an anomaly, there can be no Mrs. Hog. No. 34 ensnares me. No. 73 should not have met so foolish a person. No. 92 may bob it as she likes, but she catches no cherry of me. So I have even fixed at hap-hazard, as you'll see.

"Yours, every third Wednesday, C. L."

* A Mrs. Southey headed the enclosed list.

Lamb was entirely destitute of what is commonly called "a taste for music." A few old tunes ran in his head; now and then the expression of a sentiment, though never of a song, touched him with rare and exquisite delight; and Braham in his youth, Miss Rennell, who died too soon, and who used to sing the charming air, "In infancy our hopes and fears," and Miss Burrell, won his ear and his heart. But, usually, music only confused him, and an opera—to which he once or twice tried to accompany Miss Isola—was to him a maze of sound in which he almost lost his wits. But he did not, therefore, take less pleasure in the success of Miss Clara Novello—whose family he had known for many years, and to whom he addressed the following lines, which were inserted in the "Athenæum" of July 26, in this his last year.

TO CLARA N——.

The gods have made me most unmusical,
With feelings that respond not to the call
Of stringed harp, or voice—obtuse and mute
To hautboy, sackbut, dulcimer, and flute;
King David's lyre, that made the madness flee
From Saul, had been but a Jew's-harp to me;
Theorbos, violins, French horns, guitars,
Leave in my wounded ears inflicted scars;
I hate those trills, and shakes, and sounds that float
Upon the captive air; I know no note,
Nor ever shall, whatever folks may say,
Of the strange mysteries of *Sol* and *Fa*;
I sit at oratorios like a fish,
Incapable of sound, and only wish
The thing was over. Yet do I admire,
Oh tuneful daughter of a tuneful sire,
Thy painful labours in a science, which
To your deserts I pray may make you rich
As much as you are loved, and add a grace
To the most musical Novello race.
Women lead men by the nose, some cynics say;
You draw them by the ear—a delicater way.

C. LAMB.

He had now to sustain the severest of his losses. After a long and painful illness, borne with a heroic patience, which concealed the intensity of his sufferings from the bystanders, Coleridge died. As in the instance of Hazlitt, Lamb did not feel the immediate blow so acutely as he himself expected; but the calamity sank deep into his mind, and was, I believe, seldom far from his thoughts. It had been arranged that the attendance at the funeral should be confined to the family of the departed poet and philosopher, and Lamb, therefore, was spared the misery of going through the dismal ceremony of mourning. For the first week he forbore to write; but at its close he addressed the following short letter to one of the

family of him whom he once so justly denominated Coleridge's "more than friend." Like most of Lamb's letters, it is undated, but the postmark is August 5, 1834.

TO THE REV. JAMES GILMAN.

"My dear Sir—The sad week being over, I must write to you to say that I was glad of being spared from attending; I have no words to express my feeling with you all. I can only say that when you think a short visit from me would be acceptable, when your father and mother shall be able to see me *with comfort*, I will come to the bereaved house. Express to them my tenderest regards, and hopes that they will continue our friends still. We both love and respect them as much as a human being can, and finally thank them with our hearts for what they have been to the poor departed.

"God bless you all.

"C. LAMB.

"Mr. Walden's, Church-street, Edmonton."

Shortly after, assured that his presence would be welcome, Lamb went to Highgate. There he asked leave to see the nurse who had attended upon Coleridge; and being struck and affected by the feeling she manifested towards his friend, insisted on her receiving five guineas from him—a gratuity which seemed almost incomprehensible to the poor woman, but which Lamb could not help giving as an immediate expression of his own gratitude. From her he learned the effort by which Coleridge had suppressed the expression of his sufferings, and the discovery affected him even more than the news of his death. He would startle his friends sometimes by suddenly exclaiming, "Coleridge is dead!" and then pass on to common themes, having obtained the momentary relief of oppressed spirits. He still continued, however, his monthly visits to Mr. Carey, and was ready to write an acrostic or a complimentary epigram at the suggestion of any friend. The following is the last of his effusions in verse.

TO MARGARET W——.

'Margaret, in happy hour
Christen'd from that humble flower
Which we a daisy* call!
May thy pretty namesake be
In all things a type of thee,
And image thee in all.

Like *it* you show a modest face,
An unpretending native grace;
The tulip and the pink,

* Marguerite, in French, signifies a daisy.

The chma and the damask rose,
And every flaunting flower that blows,
In the comparing shrink.

Of lowly fields you think no scorn;
Yet gayest gardens would adorn,
And grace, wherever set.
Home-seated in your lonely bower,
Or wedded—a transplanted flower—
I bless you, Margaret!

CHARLES LAMB.

Edmonton, Oct. 8, 1834.

A present of game from an unknown admirer produced the following acknowledgment in the Athenæum of 30th November, destined to be, in sad verity, the last essay of Elia.

THOUGHTS ON PRESENTS OF GAME, &c.

"We love to have our friend in the country sitting thus at our table *by proxy;* to apprehend his presence (though a hundred miles may be between us) by a turkey, whose goodly aspect reflects to us his 'plump corpusculum;' to taste him in grouse or woodcock; to feel him gliding down in the toast peculiar to the latter; to concorporate him in a slice of Canterbury brawn. This is, indeed, to have him within ourselves; to know him intimately; such participation is, methinks, *unitive*, as the old theologians phrase it."—*Last Essays of Elia.*

"Elia presents his acknowledgments to his 'Correspondent unknown' for a basket of prodigiously fine game. He takes for granted that so amiable a character must be a reader of the *Athenæum*, else he had meditated a notice in *The Times*. Now if this friend had consulted the Delphic oracle for a present suited to the palate of Elia, he could not have hit upon a morsel so acceptable. The birds he is barely thankful for; pheasants are poor *fowls* disguised in fine feathers. But a hare roasted hard and brown, with gravy and melted butter!—old Mr. Chambers, the sensible clergyman in Warwickshire, whose son's acquaintance has made many hours happy in the life of Elia, used to allow a pound of Epping to every hare. Perhaps that was overdoing it. But, in spite of the note of Philomel, who, like some fine poets, that think no scorn to adopt plagiarisms from a humble brother, reiterates every spring her cuckoo cry of 'Jug, Jug, Jug,' Elia pronounces that a hare, to be truly palated, must be roasted. Jugging sophisticates her. In *our* way it eats so 'crips,' as Mrs. Minikin says. Time was, when Elia was not arrived at his taste, that he preferred to all luxuries a roasted pig. But he disclaims all such green-sickness appetites in future, though he hath to acknowledge the receipt of many a delicacy in that kind from

correspondents—good, but mistaken men—in consequence of their erroneous supposition that he had carried up into manhood life the prepossessions of childhood. From the worthy Vicar of Enfield he acknowledges a tithe contribution of extraordinary sapor. The ancients must have loved hares. Else why adopt the word *lepores* (obviously from *lepus*) but for some subtile analogy between the delicate flavour of the latter, and the finer relishes of wit in what we most poorly translate *pleasantries*. The fine madnesses of the poet are the very decoction of his diet. Thence is he hare-brained. Harum-scarum is a libellous unfounded phrase of modern usage. 'Tis true the hare is the most circumspect of animals, sleeping with her eye open. Her ears, ever erect, keep them in that wholesome exercise which conduces them to form the very tit-bit of the admirers of this noble animal. Noble will I call her in spite of her detractors, who, from occasional demonstration of the principle of self-preservation (common to all animals), infer in her a defect of heroism. Half a hundred horsemen, with thrice the number of dogs, scour the country in pursuit of puss across three counties; and because the well-flavoured beast, weighing the odds, is willing to evade the hue and cry, with her delicate ears shrinking perchance from discord—comes the grave naturalist, Linnæus perchance, or Buffon, and gravely sets down the hare as a—timid animal. Why Achilles or Bully Dawson would have declined the preposterous combat.

"In fact, how light of digestion we feel after a hare! How tender its processes after swallowing! What chyle it promotes! How ethereal! as if its living celerity were a type of its nimble coursing through the animal juices. The notice might be longer. It is intended less as a Natural History of the Hare than a cursory thanks to the country 'good Unknown.' The hare has many friends, but none sincerer than

"ELIA."

A short time only before Lamb's fatal illness, he yielded to my urgent importunity, and met a small party of his friends at dinner at my house, where we had provided for him some of the few articles of food which now seemed to hit his fancy, and among them the hare, which had supplanted pig in his just esteem, with the hope of exciting his very delicate appetite. We were not disappointed; he ate with a relish not usual with him of late years, and passed the evening in his happiest mood. Among the four or five who met him on this occasion, the last on which I saw him in health, were his old friends Mr. Barron Field, Mr. Procter, and Mr. Forster, the

author of the "Lives of Eminent English Statesmen," a friend of comparatively recent date, but one with whom Lamb found himself as much at home as if he had known him for years. Mr. Field, in a short but excellent memoir of Lamb, in the "Annual Biography and Obituary" of 1836, has brought this evening vividly to recollection; and I have a melancholy satisfaction in quoting a passage from it as he has recorded it. After justly eulogizing Lamb's sense of "The Virtue of Suppression in Writing," Mr. Field proceeds:—

"We remember, at the very last supper we ate with him, he quoted a passage from Prior's 'Henry and Emma,' illustrative of this discipline; and yet he said that he loved Prior as much as any man, but that his 'Henry and Emma' was a vapid paraphrase of the old poem of 'The Nutbrowne Mayde.' For example, at the *dénouement* of the ballad Prior makes Henry rant out to his devoted Emma—

'In me behold the potent Edgar's heir,
Illustrious earl! him terrible in war.
Let Loire confess, for she has felt his sword,
And trembling fled before the British lord.'

And so on for a dozen couplets, heroic, as they are called. And then Mr. Lamb made us mark the modest simplicity with which the noble youth discloses himself to his mistress in the old poem:—

'Now, understand,
To Westmoreland,
Which is my heritage
(in a parenthesis, as it were),
I will you bring,
And with a ring,
By way of marriage,
I will you take,
And lady make,
As shortly as I can.
So have you won
An earle's son,
And not a vanquish'd man.'

"How he loved these old rhymes, and with what justice!"—p. 14, 15.

In December Mr. Lamb received a letter from a gentleman, a stranger to him—Mr. Childs, of Bungay, whose copy of "Elia" had been sent on an oriental voyage, and who, in order to replace it, applied to Mr. Lamb. The following in his reply.

TO MR. CHILD.

"Monday. Church-street, EDMONTON (not Enfield, as you erroneously direct yours).

"Dear Sir—The volume which you seem to want is not to be had for love or money. I with difficulty procured a copy for myself. Yours is gone to enlighten the tawny Hindoos. What a supreme felicity to the author (only he is no traveller) on the Ganges or Hydaspes (Indian streams) to meet a smutty Gentoo reader to burst with laughing at the tale of Bo-Bo! for doubtless it hath been translated into all the dialects of the East. I grieve the less that Europe should want it. I cannot gather from your letter whether you are aware that a second series of the Essays is published by Moxon, in Dover-street, Piccadilly, called 'The Last Essays of Elia,' and, I am told, is not inferior to the former. Shall I order a copy for you, and will you accept it? Shall I *lend* you, at the same time, my sole copy of the former volume (oh! return it) for a month or two? In return, you shall favour me with the loan of one of those Norfolk grunters that you laud so highly; I promise not to keep it above a day. What a funny name Bungay is! I never dreamed of a correspondent thence. I used to think of it as some Utopian town or borough in Gotham land. I now believe in its existence as part of merry England.

[Here some lines are scratched out.]

The part I have scratched out is the best of the letter. Let me have your commands.

CH. LAMB *alias* ELIA."

A few days after this letter was written an accident befell Mr. Lamb, which seemed trifling at first, but which terminated in a fatal issue. In taking his daily morning walk on the London Road as far as the inn where John Gilpin's ride is pictured, he stumbled against a stone, fell, and slightly injured his face. The wounds seemed healing, when erysipelas in the head came on, and he sunk beneath the disease, happily without pain. On Friday evening Mr. Ryle, of the India House, who had been appointed co-executor with me of his will some years before, called on me, and informed me that he was in danger. I went over to Edmonton on the following morning, and found him very weak, and nearly insensible to things passing around him. Now and then a few words were audible, from which it seemed that his mind, in its feebleness, was intent on kind and hospitable thoughts. His last correspondent, Mr. Childs, had sent a present of a turkey instead of the suggested pig; and the broken sentences which

could be heard were of some meeting of friends to partake of it. I do not think he knew me; and, having vainly tried to engage his attention, I left him, not believing his death so near at hand. In less than an hour afterward his voice gradually grew fainter, as he still murmured the names of Moxon, Procter, and some other old friends, and he sank into death as placidly as into sleep. On the following Saturday his remains were laid in a deep grave in Edmonton churchyard, made in a spot which, about a fortnight before, he had pointed out to his sister, on an afternoon wintry walk, as the place where he wished to be buried.

So died, in the sixtieth year of his age, one of the most remarkable and amiable men who have ever lived. Few of his numerous friends were aware of his illness before they heard of his death; and, until that illness seized him, he had appeared so little changed by time, so likely to continue for several years, and he was so intimately associated with everyday engagements and feelings, that the news was as strange as it was mournful. When the first sad surprise was over, several of his friends strove to do justice to their own recollections of him; and articles upon his character and writings, all written out of the heart, appeared from Mr. Procter in the "Athenæum," from Mr. Forster in the "New Monthly Magazine," from Mr. Patmore in the "Court Magazine," and from Mr. Moxon in Leigh Hunt's London Journal, besides others whose authors are unknown to me; and subsequently many affectionate allusions from pens which his own had inspired, have been gleaned out in various passages of "Blackwood," "Fraser," "Tait," and almost every periodical work of reputation. The "Recollections of Coleridge," by Mr. Allsop, also breathed the spirit of admiration for his elevated genius, which the author—one whom Lamb held in the highest esteem for himself, and for his devotion to Coleridge—had for years expressed both in his words and in deeds. But it is not possible for the subtilest characteristic power, even when animated by the warmest personal regard, to give to those who never had the privilege of his companionship an idea of what Lamb was. There was an apparent contradiction in him, which seemed an inconsistency between thoughts closely associated, and which was, in reality, nothing but the contradiction of his genius and his fortune, fantastically exhibiting itself in different aspects, which close intimacy could alone appreciate. He would startle you with the finest perception of truth, separating, by a phrase, the real from a tissue of conventional falsehoods, and the next moment, by some whimsical invention, make you "doubt truth to be a liar." He would touch

nmost pulse of profound affection, and then break off in
jest, which would seem profane "to ears polite," but
as profound a meaning to those who had the right key
is most pathetic suggestions; and where he loved and
l most, he would vent the overflowing of his feeling in
s that looked like rudeness. He touches on this strange
ırce of love in his "Farewell to Tobacco," in a passage
h may explain some startling freedoms with those he him-
oved most dearly.

"Irony all, and feign'd abuse,
Such as perplex'd lovers use,
At a need, when in despair,
To paint forth their fairest fair;
Or in part but to express
That exceeding comeliness,
Which their fancies doth so strike
They borrow language of dislike;
And, instead of 'dearest miss,'
Jewel, honey, sweetheart, bliss,
And those forms of old admiring,
Call her cockatrice and siren,
Basilisk, and all that's evil,
Witch, hyena, mermaid, devil,
Ethiop, wench, and blackamoor,
Monkey, ape, and twenty more,
Friendly traitress, loving foe.
Not that she is truly so,
But no other way they know
A contentment to express
Borders so upon excess,
That they do not rightly wot
Whether it be pain or not."

s, in the very excess of affection to his sister, whom he
l above all else on earth, he would sometimes address to
some words of seeming reproach, yet so tinged with a
orous irony that none but an entire stranger could mistake
drift. His anxiety for her health, even in his most con-
l moments, was unceasing. If, in company, he perceived
ooked languid, he would repeatedly ask her, "Mary, does
head ache?" "Don't you feel unwell?" and would be
fied by none of her gentle assurances that his fears were
ndless. He was always afraid of her sensibilities being
leeply engaged; and if in her presence any painful acci-
or history was discussed, he would turn the conversation
some desperate joke. Miss Beetham, the author of the
y of Marie," which Lamb esteemed one of the most
eful and truly feminine works in a literature rich in fe-
genius, who has reminded me of the trait in some recol-
ons of Lamb with which she has furnished me, relates
once when she was speaking to Miss Lamb of Charles,
in her earnestness Miss Lamb had laid her hand kindly

on the eulogist's shoulder, he came up hastily and interrupted them, saying, "Come, come, we must not talk sentimentally," and took up the conversation in his gayest strain.

Many of Lamb's witty and curious sayings have been repeated since his death, which are worthy to be held in undying remembrance; but they give no idea of the general tenour of his conversation, which was far more singular and delightful in the traits, which could never be recalled, than in the epigrammatic turns which it is possible to quote. It was fretted into perpetual eddies of verbal felicity and happy thought, with little tranquil intervals reflecting images of exceeding elegance and grace. He sometimes poured out puns in startling succession; sometimes curiously contrived a train of sentences to introduce the catastrophe of a pun, which, in that case, was often startling from its own demerit. At Mr. Carey's one day he introduced and kept up an elaborate dissertation on the various uses and abuses of the word *nice;* and, when its variations were exhausted, showed what he had been driving at by exclaiming, "Well! now we have held a Council of Nice." "A pun," said he, in a letter to Coleridge, in which he eulogized the Odes and Addresses of his friends Hood and Reynolds, "is a thing of too much consequence to be thrown in as a makeweight. You shall read one of the Addresses twice over and miss the puns, and it shall be quite as good, or better, than when you discover them. A pun is a noble thing *per se*. Oh, never bring it in as an accessary! A pun is a sole digest of reflection (vide my 'Aids' to that awaking from a savage state); it is entire; it fills the mind; it is as perfect as a sonnet; better. It limps ashamed in the train and retinue of humour. It knows it should have an establishment of its own. The one, for instance, I made the other day; I forget which it was." Indeed, Lamb's choicest puns and humorous expressions could not be recollected. They were born of the evanescent feeling, and died with it; "one moment *bright*, then gone for ever." The shocks of pleasurable surprise were so rapid in succession, and the thoughts suggested so new, that one destroyed the other, and left only the sense of delight behind. Frequently as I had the happiness of seeing him during twenty years, I can add nothing from my own store of recollection to those which have been collected by others, and those I almost hesitate to repeat, so vapid is their effect when printed compared to that which they produced when, stammered out, they gave to the moment its victory.*

* Miss Beetham has kindly supplied the following examples of his conversation:—A Miss Pate (when he heard of her, he asked if she was any rela-

It cannot be denied or concealed that Lamb's excellences, moral and intellectual, were blended with a single frailty; so intimately associating itself with all that was most charming

tion to Mr. John *Head* of Ipswich) was at a party, and he said on hearing her name, "Miss Pate I hate." "You are the first person who ever told me so, however," said she. "Oh! I mean nothing by it. If it had been Miss Dove, I should have said, Miss Dove I love; or Miss Pike I like." About this time also I saw Mr. Hazlitt for the first time at their house, and was talking on metaphysical subjects with him. Mr. Lamb came up; but my companion was very eloquent, and I begged him not to interrupt us. He stood silent, and Mr. Dyer came to me. "I know," said he, "that Mr. Cristall is a very fine artist, but I should like to know in what his merit principally consists. Is it colouring, character, design, &c.? my eyes are so bad!" On which Mr. Lamb began rhyming—

"Says Mr. Dyer to Mr. Dawe,
Pray how does Mr. Cristall draw?
Says Mr. Dawe to Mr. Dyer,
He draws as well as you'd desire."

A lady he was intimate with had dark eyes, and one evening people rather persecuted him to praise them. "You should now write a couplet in praise of her eyes." "Ay, do, Mr. Lamb," said she, "make an epigram about my eyes." He looked at her—

"Your eyes! your eyes!
Are both of a size!"

which was praise, but the least that could be accorded. Mrs. S—— recommended *honey* to him as a good thing for the eyes, and said her daughter had received much benefit from it. "I knew," said he, "she had sweet eyes, but had no idea before how they became so."

At my house once a person said something about his grandmother. "Was she a tall woman?" said Lamb. "I don't know; no. Why do you ask?" "Oh, mine was; she was a granny dear." He asked an absent lady's name who had rather sharp features. On hearing it was Elizabeth, or something of the kind, he said, "I should have thought, if it had been Mary, she might have been St. Mary Axe." Another, who was very much marked with the smallpox, he said, looked as if the devil had ridden roughshod over her face. I saw him talking to her afterward with great apparent interest, and noticed it, saying, "I thought he had not liked her." His reply was, "I like her internals very well." When I knew him first, I happened to sit next him at dinner, and he was running on about some lady who had died of love for him, saying, "he was very sorry," but we could not command such inclinations; making all the commonplace stuff said on such occasions appear very ridiculous, his sister laughingly interrupting him now and then by saying, "Why, she's alive now!" "Why, she's married, and has a large family," &c. He would not, however, allow it, and went on. With a very serious face, therefore, when he looked my way, I said, "And did she really die?" With a look of indignant astonishment at my simplicity, he said, "And do you think I should?" Not being able to suppress a smile, he saw what I had been about; and, without finishing his speech, turned away his head. The way in which he would imitate a person who had been detected in some petty theft was inimitable. He began once by saying he never had been in suspicious circumstances but once, and then he had his hand over a guinea that lay on a counter, but that he really did not know it was there, &c. My youngest sister, then a little girl, in her talk afterward, seemed to think he must have known it.

Mrs. H—— was sitting on a sofa one day between Mr. Montague and Mr. Lamb. The latter spoke to her, but all her attention was given to the other party. At last they ceased talking, and, turning round to Mr. Lamb, she asked what it was he had been saying. He replied, "Ask Mr. Montague, for it went *in at one ear* and out at another."

in the one and sweetest in the other, that, even if it were right to withdraw it wholly from notice, it would be impossible without it to do justice to his virtues. The eagerness with which he would quaff exciting liquors from an early period of life, proved that to a physical peculiarity of constitution

One day, at the exhibition of the Royal Academy, I was sitting on a form, looking at the catalogue, and answering some young people about me who had none, or spared themselves the trouble of consulting it. There was a large picture of Prospero and Miranda; and I had just said, "It is by *Shee*;" when a voice near me said, "Would it not be more grammatical to say by *her*?" I looked, it was Mr. Lamb.

He went with a party down to my brother Charles's ship, in which the officers gave a ball to their friends. My brother hired a vessel to take us down to it, and some one of the company asked its name. On hearing it was the *Antelope*, Mr. Lamb cried out, "Don't name it; I have such a respect for my aunt, I cannot bear to think of her doing such a foolish action!"

I once sat with Mr. Lamb in the pit of the theatre when Mrs. Siddons gave one of her last performances. We had two vulgar and conceited women behind us, who went on explaining and commenting, to show their knowledge, in a most absurd manner. Mr. Lamb occasionally gave them a lift. When Malcom came on, he said, "*He* a king! why he is in petticoats!" One of them said to the other, "It's the dress of the country. Ignorant wretches!" *I* had, I believe, once led the discourse in company, by telling a story of a bad Arabian poet, who fell sick because he could get nobody to hear him recite: the physician grasped the cane and caned him. On this Mr. Lamb declaimed a great deal against the absurdity of reading one's own works aloud; that people were always tired instead of being pleased with it; and that he made a poem the other day, befitting the time (one of those of overwhelming darkness, such as ours in London sometimes are); and though he had not yet had time to transcribe it, and recollected it perfectly, he should never think of repeating it to other people. Everybody, of course, were entreating him to favour them by repeating it, assuring him they should like it very much; and *at length* he complied. "Oh my Gog! what a fog!" "A fine thing to make a fuss about!" said Miss M——; "why, I can make a second part extempore—I cannot see to kill a flea!"

A lady who had been visiting in the neighbourhood of Ipswich, on her return could talk of nothing but the beauty of the country and the merits of the people. Mr. Lamb remarked that "she was Suffolk-ated."

The following specimens of his conversation have been supplied by another friend.

A widow-friend of Lamb having opened a preparatory school for children at Camden Town, said to him, "I live so far from town I must have a sign, I think you call it, to show that I teach children." "Well," he replied, "you can have nothing better than '*The Murder of the Innocents.*'"

A gentleman who had lived some years in China mentioned that a formidable enemy to the Chinese would arise one day in a warlike piratical nation on the borders of China—*the Ladrones*. In the course of the evening the progress of musical science in China was spoken of, and the traveller, by way of illustrating his remarks, sung a Chinese love-song. Lamb listened very gravely to this dissonant performance, and at the end exclaimed, "*God prosper the Ladrones!*"

Coleridge one day said to him, "Charles, did you ever hear me *preach*?" "I never heard you do anything else," said Lamb.

Seeing a little boy heavily laden with groceries toiling up Highgate Hill one hot summer's day, Lamb offered to assist him; took his load; and carried it for him to the house where the child was to deliver it. On laying down his burden, Lamb requested the lady of the house to remonstrate with her grocer on the inhumanity of compelling such a little boy to carry such a load. The lady bristled up, and sharply replied, "I have nothing to do with such matters;" on which Lamb, altering his tone, irresistibly said, "I hope, ma'am, you'll give me a drop of beer."

was to be ascribed, in the first instance, the strength of the temptation with which he was assailed. This kind of corporeal need; the struggles of deep thought to overcome the bashfulness and the impediment of speech which obstructed its utterance; the dull, heavy, irksome labours which hung heavy on his mornings, and dried up his spirits; and, still more, the sorrows which had environed him, and which prompted him to snatch a fearful joy; and the unbounded craving after sympathy with human feelings, conspired to disarm his power of resisting when the means of indulgence were actually before him. Great exaggerations have been prevalent on this subject, countenanced, no doubt, by the "Confessions" which, in the prodigality of his kindness, he contributed to his friend's collection of essays and authorities against the use of spirituous liquors; for, although he had rarely the power to overcome the temptation when presented, he made heroic sacrifices in flight. His final abandonment of tobacco, after many ineffectual attempts, was one of these—a princely sacrifice. He had loved smoking, "not wisely, but too well," for he had been content to use the coarsest varieties of the "great plant." When Dr. Parr—who took only the finest tobacco, used to half fill his pipe with salt, and smoked with a philosophic calmness—saw Lamb smoking the strongest preparation of the weed, puffing out smoke like some furious enchanter, he gently laid down his pipe, and asked him how he had acquired his power of smoking at such a rate. Lamb replied, "I toiled after it, sir, as some men toil after virtue." Partly to shun the temptations of society, and partly to preserve his sister's health, he fled from London, where his pleasures and his heart were, and buried himself in the solitude of the country, to him always dismal. He would even deny himself the gratification of meeting Wordsworth or Southey, or use it very sparingly during their visits to London, in order that the accompaniments of the table might not entice him to excess. And if sometimes, after miles of solitary communing with his own sad thoughts, the village inn did invite him to quaff a glass of sparkling ale; and if, when his retreat was lighted up with the presence of some old friend, he was unable to refrain from the small potion which was too much for his feeble frame, let not the stout-limbed and the happy exult over the consequence! Drinking with him, except so far as it cooled a feverish thirst, was not a sensual, but an intellectual pleasure; it lighted up his fading fancy, enriched his humour, and impelled the struggling thought or beautiful image into day; and, perhaps, by requiring for him some portion of that allowance which he extended to

all human frailities, endeared him the more to those who so often received, and were delighted to bestow it.

Lamb's indulgence to the failings of others could hardly, indeed, be termed allowance; the name of charity is too cold to suit it. He did not merely love his friends in spite of their errors, but he loved them errors and all; so near to him was everything human. He numbered among his associates men of all varieties of opinion—philosophical, religious, and political—and found something to like, not only in the men themselves, but in themselves as associated with their theories and their schemes. In the high and calm, but devious speculations of Godwin; in the fierce hatreds of Hazlitt; in the gentle and glorious mysticism of Coleridge; in the sturdy opposition of Thelwall to the government; in Leigh Hunt's softened and fancy-streaked patriotism; in the gallant toryism of Stoddart; he found traits which made the individuals more dear to him. When Leigh Hunt was imprisoned in Cold Bath Fields for a libel, Lamb was one of his most constant visiters —and when Thelwall was striving to bring the "Champion" into notice, Lamb was ready to assist him with his pen, and to fancy himself, for the time, a Jacobin.* In this large intellectual tolerance he resembled Professor Wilson, who, notwithstanding his own decided opinions, has a compass of mind large enough to embrace all others which have noble alliances

* The following little poem—quite out of Lamb's usual style—was written for that journal.

THE THREE GRAVES.

Close by the ever-burning brimstone beds,
Where Bedloe, Oates, and Judas hide their heads,
I saw great Satan, like a sexton stand,
With his intolerable spade in hand,
Digging three graves. Of coffin shape they were,
For those who, coffinless, must enter there,
With unbless'd rites. The shrouds were of that cloth
Which Clotho weaved in her blackest wrath;
The dismal tint oppress'd the eye that dwelt
Upon it long, like darkness to be felt.
The pillows to these baleful beds were toads,
Large, living, livid, melancholy loads,
Whose softness shock'd. Worms of all monstrous size
Crawl'd round; and one upcoil'd, which never dies,
A doleful bell, inculcating despair,
Was always ringing in the heavy air.
And all around the detestable pit
Strange headless ghosts and quarter'd forms did flit;
Rivers of blood from living traitors spilt,
By treachery stung from poverty to guilt.
I ask'd the fiend for whom those rites were meant;
"These graves," quoth he, "when life's brief oil is spent,
When the dark night comes, and they're sinking bedwards,
I mean for Castles, Oliver, and Edwards."

within its range.* But not only to opposite opinions and devious habits of thought was Lamb indulgent; he discovered "the soul of goodness in things evil" so vividly, that the surrounding evil disappeared from his mental vision. Nothing —no discovery of error or of crime—could divorce his sympathy from a man who had once engaged it. He saw in the spendthrift, the outcast, only the innocent companion of his schooldays or the joyous associate of his convivial hours, and he did not even make penitence or reform a condition of his regard. Perhaps he had less sympathy with philanthropic schemers for the improvement of the world than with any other class of men; but of these he numbered two of the greatest, Clarkson, the destroyer of the slave trade, and Basil Montague, the constant opponent of the judicial infliction of death; and the labours of neither have been in vain!

To those who were not intimately acquainted with Lamb, the strong disinclination to contemplate another state of being, which he sometimes expressed in his serious conversation, and which he has solemnly confessed in his "Newyear's Eve," might cast a doubt on feelings which were essentially pious. The same peculiarity of nature which attached him to the narrow and crowded streets, in preference to the mountain and the glen—which made him loath to leave even painful circumstances and unpleasant or ill-timed company; the desire to seize and grasp all that was nearest, bound him to earth, and prompted his sympathies to revolve within a narrow circle. Yet in that very power of adhesion to outward things might be discerned the strength of a spirit destined to live beyond them. Within the contracted sphere of his habits and desires he detected the subtilest essences of Christian kindliness, shed over it a light from heaven, and peopled it with divine fancies and

> "Thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
> That they were born for immortality."

Although he numbered among his associates freethinkers and skeptics, he had a great dislike to any profane handling of sacred subjects, and always discouraged polemical discussion. One evening, when Irving and Coleridge were in company, and a young gentleman had spoken slightingly of religion, Lamb remained silent; but, when the party broke

* Lamb only once met that remarkable person—who has, probably, more points of resemblance to him than any other living poet—and was quite charmed with him. They walked out from Enfield together, and strolled happily a long summer's day, not omitting, however, a call for a refreshing draught. Lamb called for a pot of ale or porter—half of which would have been his own usual allowance; and was delighted to hear the professor, on the appearance of the foaming tankard, say reproachfully to the waiter, "and one for me!"

up, he said to the youth who had thus annoyed his guests, "Pray, did you come here in a hat, sir, or in a turban?"

The range of Lamb's reading was varied, but yet peculiar. He rejoiced in all old English authors, but cared little for the moderns, except one or two; and those whom he loved as authors because they were his friends. Attached always to things of flesh and blood rather than to "the bare earth and mountains bare, and grass in the green field," he chiefly loved the great dramatists, whose beauties he supported, and sometimes heightened, in his suggestive criticisms. While he enjoyed Wordsworth's poetry, especially "The Excursion," with a love which grew upon him from his youth, he would repeat some of Pope's divine compliments or Dryden's lines, weighty with sterling sense or tremendous force of satire, with eyes trembling into tears. The comedies of Wycherley, and Congreve, and Farquhar, were not to him gross and sensual, but airy, delicate creations, framed out of coarse materials it might be, but evaporating in wit and grace, harmless effusions of the intellect and the fancy. The ponderous dulness of old controversialists, the dead weight of volumes of once fierce dispute, of which time had exhausted the venom, did not appal him. He liked the massive reading of the old Quaker records, the huge density of old schoolmen, better than the flippancy of modern criticism. If you spoke of Lord Byron, he would turn the subject by quoting the lines descriptive of his namesake in *Love's Labour's Lost*—"Oft have I heard of you, my Lord Byron," &c.—for he could find nothing to revere or love in poetry of that extraordinary but most uncomfortable poet, except the apostrophe to Parnassus, in which he exults in the sight of the real mountain instead of the mere poetic image. All the Laras, and Giaours, and Childe Harolds were to him but "unreal mockeries"—the phantasms of a feverish dream—forms which did not appeal to the sympathies of mankind, and never can find root among them. Shelley's poetry, too, was icy cold to him; except one or two of the minor poems, in which he could not help admiring the exquisite beauty of the expression; and the "Cenci," in which, notwithstanding the painful nature of the subject, there is a warmth and passion, and a correspondent simplicity of diction, which prove how mighty a poet the author would have become had he lived long enough for his feelings to have free discourse with his creative power. Responding only to the touch of human affection, he could not bear poetry which, instead of making the whole world kin, renders our own passions, and frailties, and virtues strange to us; presents them at distance in splendid masquerade; exalts them into new and

unauthorized mythology, and crystallizes all our freshest loves and mantling joys into clusters of radiant fancies. He made some amends for his indifference to Shelley by his admiration of Mrs. Shelley's "Frankenstein," which he thought the most extraordinary realization of the idea of a being out of nature which had ever been effected. For the Scotch novels he cared very little, not caring to be puzzled with new plots, and preferring to read Fielding, and Smollett, and Richardson, whose stories were familiar, over and over again, to being worried with the task of threading the maze of fresh adventure. But the good-naturedness of Sir Walter to all his contemporaries won his admiration, and he heartily rejoiced in the greatness of his fame and the rich rewards showered upon him, and desired they might accumulate for the glory of literature and the triumph of kindness. He was never introduced to Sir Walter; but he used to speak with gratitude and pleasure of the circumstances under which he saw him once in Fleet-street. A man, in the dress of a mechanic, stopped him just at Inner Temple-gate, and said, touching his hat, "I beg your pardon, sir, but perhaps you would like to see Sir Walter Scott; that is he just crossing the road;" and Lamb stammered out his hearty thanks to his truly humane informer.

Of his own writings it is now superfluous to speak; for, after having encountered long derision and neglect, they have taken their place among the classics of his language. They stand alone, at once singular and delightful. They are all carefully elaborated; yet never were works written in higher defiance to the conventional pomp of style. A sly hit, a happy pun, a humorous combination, lets the light into the intricacies of the subject, and supplies the place of ponderous sentences. As his serious conversation was his best, so his serious writing is far preferable to his fantastical humours—cheering as they are, and suggestive ever as they are of high and invigorating thoughts. Seeking his materials, for the most part, in the common paths of life—often in the humblest—he gives an importance to everything, and sheds a grace over all. The spirit of gentility seems to breathe around all his persons; he detects the venerable and the excellent in the narrowest circumstances and humblest conditions, with the same subtilty which reveals the hidden soul of the greatest works of genius. In all things he is most human. Of all modern writers, his works are most immediately directed to give us heart-ease and to make us happy.

Among the felicities of Lamb's checkered life, that which he *esteemed* most was his intimate friendship with some of

the greatest of our poets—Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth; the last and greatest of whom has paid a tribute to his memory which may fitly close this sketch of his life.

"To a good man of most dear memory
This stone is sacred. Here he lies apart
From that great city where he first drew breath,
Was reared and taught; and humbly earned his bread,
To the strict labours of the merchant's desk
By duty chained. Not seldom did those tasks
Teaze, and the thought of time so spent depress
His spirit, but the recompense was high;
Firm Independence, Bounty's rightful sire;
Affections, warm as sunshine, free as air;
And when the precious hours of leisure came,
Knowledge and wisdom, gained from converse sweet
With books, or while he ranged the crowded streets
With a keen eye and overflowing heart:
So genius triumphed over seeming wrong,
And poured out truth in works by thoughtful love
Inspired—works potent over smiles and tears.
And as round mountain-tops the lightning plays,
Thus innocently sported, breaking forth
As from a cloud of some grave sympathy,
Humour, and wild instinctive wit, and all
The vivid flashes of his spoken words.
From the most gentle creature nursed in fields
Had been derived the name he bore—a name,
Wherever Christian altars have been raised,
Hallowed to meekness and to innocence;
And if in him meekness at times gave way,
Provoked out of herself by troubles strange,
Many and strange, that hung about his life;
Still, at the centre of his being, lodged
A soul by resignation sanctified:
And if too often, self-reproached, he felt
That innocence belongs not to our kind,
A power that never ceased to abide in him,
Charity, mid the multitude of sins
That she can cover, left not his exposed
To an unforgiving judgment from just Heaven.
Oh, he was good, if e'er a good man lived!
* * * * *
From a reflecting mind and sorrowing heart
Those simple lines flowed with an earnest wish,
Though but a doubting hope, that they might serve
Fitly to guard the precious dust of him
Whose virtues called them forth. That aim is missed;
For much that truth most urgently required
Had from a faltering pen been asked in vain:
Yet, haply, on the printed page received,
The imperfect record, there, may stand unblamed
As long as verse of mine shall breathe the air
Of memory, or see the light of love.
Thou wert a scorner of the fields, my friend!
But more in show than truth! and from the fields
And from the mountains, to thy rural grave
Transported, my soothed spirit hovers o'er
Its green untrodden turf and blowing flowers;
And, taking up a voice, shall speak (though still
Awed by the theme's peculiar sanctity,
Which words less free presumed not even to touch)
Of that fraternal love, whose heaven-lit lamp

From infancy, through manhood, to the last
Of threescore years, and to thy latest hour,
Burnt on with ever-strengthening light, enshrined
Within thy bosom.
'Wonderful' hath been
The love established between man and man,
'Passing the love of women;' and between
Man and his helpmate in fast wedlock joined
Through God, is raised a spirit and soul of love,
Without whose blissful influence Paradise
Had been no Paradise; and earth were now
A waste, where creatures bearing human form,
Direst of savage beasts, would roam in fear,
Joyless and comfortless. Our days glide on;
And let him grieve who cannot choose but grieve
That he hath been an Elm without his Vine,
And her bright dower of clustering charities,
That, round his trunk and branches, might have clung
Enriching and adorning. Unto thee
Not so enriched, not so adorned, to thee
Was given (say rather thou of later birth
Wert given to her) a sister—'tis a word
Timidly uttered, for she lives, the meek,
The self-restraining, and the ever-kind;
In whom thy reason and intelligent heart
Found—for all interests, hopes, and tender cares,
All softening, humanizing, hallowing powers,
Whether withheld, or for her sake unsought—
More than sufficient recompense!
Her love
(What weakness prompts the voice to tell it here?)
Was as the love of mothers; and when years,
Lifting the boy to man's estate, had called
The long-protected to assume the part
Of a protector, the first filial tie
Was undissolved; and, in or out of sight,
Remained imperishably interwoven
With life itself. Thus, mid a shifting world,
Did they together testify of time
And seasons' difference—a double tree
With two collateral stems sprung from one root;
Such were they—such through life they *might* have been
In union, in partition only such;
Otherwise wrought the will of the Most High;
Yet, through all visitations and all trials,
Still they were faithful; like two vessels launched
From the same beach one ocean to explore
With mutual help, and sailing—to their league
True, as inexorable winds, or bars
Floating or fixed of polar ice, allow.

But turn we rather, let my spirit turn
With thine, oh silent and invisible Friend!
To those dear intervals, nor rare nor brief,
When reunited, and by choice withdrawn
From miscellaneous converse, ye were taught
That the remembrance of foregone distress,
And the worst fear of future ill (which oft
Doth hang around it, as a sickly child
Upon its mother), may be both alike
Disarmed of power to unsettle present good
So prized, and things inward and outward held
In such an even balance, that the heart

Acknowledges God's grace, his mercy feels,
And in its depth of gratitude is still.
Oh gift divine of quiet sequestration!
The hermit, exercised in prayer and praise,
And feeding daily on the hope of heaven,
Is happy in his vow, and fondly cleaves
To life-long singleness; but happier far
Was, to your souls, and, to the thoughts of others,
A thousand times more beautiful appeared,
Your *dual* loneliness. The sacred tie
Is broken; yet why grieve? for Time but holds
His moiety in trust, till Joy shall lead
To the bless'd world where parting is unknown."

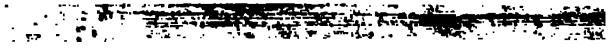
END OF LAMB'S LETTERS AND LIFE.

THE

POETICAL WORKS

OF

CHARLES LAMB



DEDICATION.*

TO

S. T. COLERIDGE, ESQ.

MY DEAR COLERIDGE,

You will smile to see the slender labours of your friend designated by the title of *works;* but such was the wish of the gentlemen who have kindly undertaken the trouble of collecting them, and from their judgment could be no appeal.

It would be a kind of disloyalty to offer to any one but yourself a volume containing the *early pieces*, which were first published among your poems, and were fairly derivatives from you and them. My friend Lloyd and myself came into our first battle (authorship is a sort of warfare) under cover of the greater AJAX. How this association, which shall always be a dear and proud recollection to me, came to be broken—who snapped the three-fold cord—whether yourself (but I know that was not the case) grew ashamed of your former companions—or whether (which is by much the more probable) some ungracious bookseller was author of the separation—I cannot tell; but wanting the support of your friendly elm, (I speak for myself,) my vine has, since that time, put forth few or no fruits; the sap (if ever it had any) has become, in a manner, dried up and extinct; and you will find your old associate, in his second volume, dwindled into prose and *criticism*.

Am I right in assuming this as the cause? or is it that, as years come upon us, (except with some more healthy-happy spirits,) life itself loses much of its poetry for us? we transcribe but what we read in the great volume of Nature; and, as the characters grow dim, we turn off, and look another way. You yourself write no Christables or Ancient Mariners now.

Some of the sonnets, which shall be carelessly turned over by the general reader, may happily awaken in you remembrances which I should be sorry should be ever totally extinct—the memory

"Of summer days and delightful years"—

even so far back as to those old suppers at our old ********* Inn—when life was fresh and topics exhaustless—and you first kindled in me, if not the power, yet the love of poetry, and beauty, and kindliness.

"What words have I heard
Spoke at the Mermaid!"

The world has given you many a shrewd nip and gird since that time, but either my eyes are grown dimmer, or my old friend is the *same* who stood before me three-and-twenty years ago—his hair a little confessing the hand of time, but still shrouding the same capacious brain—his heart not altered, scarcely where it "alteration finds."

One piece, Coleridge, I have ventured to publish in its original form, though I have heard you complain of a certain over-imitation of the antique in the

* Prefixed to the author's works published in 1818.

style. If I could see any way of getting rid of the objection without re-writing it entirely, I would make some sacrifices. But when I wrote John Woodvil, I never proposed to myself any distinct deviation from common English. I had been newly initiated in the writings of our elder dramatists; Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger, were then a *first love*; and from what I was so freshly conversant in, what wonder if my language imperceptibly took a tinge? The very *time* which I had chosen for my story, that which immediately followed the restoration, seemed to require, in an English play, that the English should be of rather an older cast than that of the precise year in which it happened to be written. I wish it had not some faults, which I can less vindicate than the language.

I remain,
My dear Coleridge,
Yours,
With unabated esteem,
C. LAMB.

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POEMS.

HESTER.

When maidens such as Hester die,
Their place ye may not well supply,
Though ye among a thousand try,
With vain endeavour.

A month or more hath she been dead,
Yet cannot I by force be led
To think upon the wormy bed
And her together.

A springy motion in her gait,
A rising step, did indicate
Of pride and joy no common rate,
That flush'd her spirit.

I know not by what name beside
I shall it call: if 'twas not pride,
It was a joy to that allied,
She did inherit.

Her parents held the Quaker rule,
Which doth the human feeling cool,
But she was train'd in Nature's school,
Nature had bless'd her.

A waking eye, a prying mind,
A heart that stirs, is hard to blind,
A hawk's keen sight ye cannot blind,
Ye could not Hester.

My sprightly neighbour, gone before
To that unknown and silent shore,
Shall we not meet, as heretofore,
Some summer morning,

When from thy cheerful eyes a ray
Hath struck a bliss upon the day,
A bliss that would not go away,
A sweet forewarning?

TO CHARLES LLOYD,

AN UNEXPECTED VISITER.

ALONE, obscure, without a friend,
A cheerless, solitary thing,
Why seeks my Lloyd the stranger out?
What offering can the stranger bring

Of social scenes, homebred delights,
That him in aught compensate may
For Stowey's pleasant winter nights,
For loves and friendships far away?

In brief oblivion to forego
Friends, such as thine, so justly dear,
And be a while with me content
To stay, a kindly loiterer, here:

For this a gleam of random joy
Hath flush'd my unaccustom'd cheek;
And, with an o'ercharged, bursting heart,
I feel the thanks I cannot speak.

Oh! sweet are all the muses' lays,
And sweet the charm of matin bird;
'Twas long since these estranged ears
The sweeter voice of friend had heard.

The voice hath spoke: the pleasant sounds
In mem'ry's ear in after time
Shall live, to sometimes rouse a tear,
And sometimes prompt an honest rhyme.

For, when the transient charm is fled,
And when the little week is o'er,
To cheerless, friendless solitude
When I return as heretofore,

Long, long within my aching heart
The grateful sense shall cherish'd be;
I'll think less meanly of myself,
That Lloyd will sometimes think on me.

THE THREE FRIENDS.

Three young maids in friendship met;
Mary, Martha, Margaret.
Margaret was tall and fair,
Martha shorter by a hair;
If the first excell'd in feature,
Th' other's grace and ease were greater;
Mary, though to rival loath,
In their best gifts equall'd both.
They a due proportion kept;
Martha mourn'd if Margaret wept;
Margaret joy'd when any good
She of Martha understood;
And in sympathy for either
Mary was outdone by neither.
Thus far, for a happy space,
All three ran an even race,
A most constant friendship proving,
Equally beloved and loving;
All their wishes, joys, the same;
Sisters only not in name.

Fortune upon each one smiled,
As upon a favourite child;
Well to do and well to see
Were the parents of all three;
Till on Martha's father crosses
Brought a flood of worldly losses,
And his fortunes rich and great
Changed at once to low estate;
Under which o'erwhelming blow
Martha's mother was laid low;
She a hapless orphan left,
Of maternal care bereft,
Trouble following trouble fast,
Lay in a sick-bed at last.

In the depth of her affliction
Martha now received conviction,
That a true and faithful friend
Can the surest comfort lend.
Night and day, with friendship tried,
Ever constant by her side
Was her gentle Mary found,
With a love that knew no bound;
And the solace she imparted
Saved her dying broken-hearted.

In this scene of earthly things
Not one good unmixed springs.
That which had to Martha proved
A sweet consolation, moved
Different feelings of regret
In the mind of Margaret.
She, whose love was not less dear,
Nor affection less sincere
To her friend, was, by occasion
Of more distant habitation,
Fewer visits forced to pay her,
When no other cause did stay her;
And her Mary living nearer,
Margaret began to fear her,
Lest her visits day by day
Martha's heart should steal away.
That whole heart she ill could spare her,
Where till now she'd been a sharer.
From this cause with grief she pined,
Till at length her health declined.
All her cheerful spirits flew,
Fast as Martha gather'd new;
And her sickness waxed sore,
Just when Martha felt no more.

Mary, who had quick suspicion
Of her alter'd friend's condition,
Seeing Martha's convalescence
Less demanded now her presence,
With a goodness, built on reason,
Changed her measures with the season;
Turn'd her steps from Martha's door,
Went where she was wanted more;
All her care and thoughts were set
Now to tend on Margaret.

Mary living 'tween the two,
From her home could oft'ner go,
Either of her friends to see,
Than they could together be.

Truth explain'd is to suspicion
Evermore the best physician.
Soon her visits had the effect;
All that Margaret did suspect
From her fancy vanish'd clean;
She was soon what she had been,
And the colour she did lack
To her faded cheek came back.
Wounds which love had made her feel,
Love alone had power to heal.

Martha, who the frequent visit
Now had lost, and sore did miss it,
With impatience waxed cross,
Counted Margaret's gain her loss:
All that Mary did confer
On her friend, thought due to her.
In her girlish bosom rise
Little foolish jealousies,
Which into such rancour wrought,
She one day for Margaret sought;
Finding her by chance alone,
She began, with reason shown,
To insinuate a fear
Whether Mary was sincere;
Wish'd that Margaret would take heed
Whence her actions did proceed.
For herself, she'd long been minded
Not with outsides to be blinded;
All that pity and compassion
She believed was affectation;
In her heart she doubted whether
Mary cared a pin for either.
She could keep whole weeks at distance,
And not know of their existence,
While all things remain'd the same;
But, when some misfortune came,
Then she made a great parade
Of her sympathy and aid—
Not that she did really grieve,
It was only *make-believe*;

And she cared for nothing, so
She might her fine feelings show,
And get credit, on her part,
For a soft and tender heart.

With such speeches, smoothly made,
She found methods to persuade
Margaret (who, being sore
From the doubts she'd felt before,
Was prepared for mistrust)
To believe her reasons just;
Quite destroy'd that comfort glad,
Which in Mary late she had;
Made her, in experience's spite,
Think her friend a hypocrite,
And resolve, with cruel scoff,
To renounce and cast her off.

See how good turns are rewarded!
She of both is now discarded,
Who to both had been so late
Their support in low estate,
All their comfort, and their stay—
Now of both is cast away.
But the league her presence cherish'd,
Losing its best prop, soon perish'd;
She, that was a link to either,
To keep them and it together,
Being gone, the two (no wonder)
That were left soon fell asunder;
Some civilities were kept,
But the heart of friendship slept;
Love with hollow forms was fed,
But the life of love lay dead:
A cold intercourse they held,
After Mary was expell'd.

Two long years did intervene
Since they'd either of them seen,
Or, by letter, any word
Of their old companion heard—
When, upon a day, once walking,
Of indifferent matters talking,
They a female figure met;
Martha said to Margaret,

"That young maid in face does carry
A resemblance strong of Mary."
Margaret, at nearer sight,
Own'd her observation right;
But they did not far proceed
Ere they knew 'twas she indeed.
She—but, ah! how changed they view her
From that person which they knew her!
Her fine face disease had scarr'd,
And its matchless beauty marr'd;
But enough was left to trace
Mary's sweetness—Mary's grace.
When her eye did first behold them,
How they blush'd!—but when she told them
How on a sick-bed she lay
Months, while they had kept away,
And had no inquiries made
If she were alive or dead;
How, for want of a true friend,
She was brought near to her end,
And was like so to have died,
With no friend at her bedside;
How the constant irritation,
Caused by fruitless expectation
Of their coming, had extended
The illness, when she might have mended—
Then, oh then, how did reflection
Come on then with recollection!
All that she had done for them,
How it did their fault condemn.

But sweet Mary, still the same,
Kindly eased them of their shame;
Spoke to them with accents bland,
Took them friendly by the hand;
Bound them both with promise fast,
Not to speak of troubles past;
Made them on the spot declare
A new league of friendship there;
Which, without a word of strife,
Lasted thenceforth long as life.
Martha now and Margaret
Strove who most should pay the debt
Which they owed her, nor did vary
Ever after from their Mary.

TO A RIVER IN WHICH A CHILD WAS DROWNED.

Smiling river, smiling river,
On thy bosom sunbeams play;
Though they're fleeting and retreating,
Thou hast more deceit than they.

In thy channel, in thy channel,
Choked with ooze and grav'lly stones,
Deep immersed, and unhearsed,
Lies young Edward's corse: his bones

Ever whitening, ever whitening,
As thy waves against them dash;
What thy torrent in the current
Swallow'd, now it helps to wash.

As if senseless, as if senseless
Things had feeling in this case;
What so blindly and unkindly
It destroy'd, it now does grace.

THE OLD FAMILIAR FACES.

I have had playmates, I have had companions,
In my days of childhood, in my joyful schooldays,
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have been laughing, I have been carousing,
Drinking late, sitting late, with my bosom cronies,
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I loved a love once, fairest among women;
Closed are her doors on me, I must not see her—
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have a friend, a kinder friend has no man;
Like an ingrate, I left my friend abruptly;
Left him, to muse on the old familiar faces.

Ghost-like I paced round the haunts of my childhood,
Earth seem'd a desert I was bound to traverse,
Seeking to find the old familiar faces.

Friend of my bosom, thou more than a brother,
Why wert not thou born in my father's dwelling?
So might we talk of the old familiar faces—

How some they have died, and some they have left me,
And some are taken from me; all are departed;
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

A VISION OF REPENTANCE.

I SAW a famous fountain, in my dream,
Where shady pathways to a valley led;
A weeping willow lay upon that stream,
And all around the fountain brink were spread
Wide-branching trees, with dark-green leaf rich clad,
Forming a doubtful twilight—desolate and sad.

The place was such, that whoso enter'd in,
Disrobed was of every earthly thought,
And straight became as one that knew not sin,
Or to the world's first innocence was brought;
Enseem'd it now, he stood on holy ground,
In sweet and tender melancholy wrapp'd around.

A most strange calm stole o'er my soothed sprite;
Long time I stood, and longer had I stay'd,
When, lo! I saw, saw by the sweet moonlight,
Which came in silence o'er that silent shade,
Where, near the fountain, SOMETHING like DESPAIR
Made, of that weeping willow, garlands for her hair.

And eke with painful fingers she inwove
Many an uncouth stem of savage thorn—
"The willow garland, *that* was for her love,
And *these* her bleeding temples would adorn."
With sighs her heart nigh burst, salt tears fast fell,
As mournfully she bended o'er that sacred well.

To whom when I address'd myself to speak,
She lifted up her eyes, and nothing said;
The delicate red came mantling o'er her cheek,
And, gath'ring up her loose attire, she fled
To the dark covert of that woody shade,
And in her goings seem'd a timid, gentle maid.

Revolving in my mind what this should mean,
And why that lovely lady plained so;
Perplex'd in thought at that mysterious scene,
And doubting if 'twere best to stay or go,
I cast mine eyes in wistful gaze around,
When from the shades came slow a small and plaintive sound.

"PSYCHE am I, who love to dwell
In these brown shades, this woody dell,
Where never busy mortal came,
Till now, to pry upon my shame.

At thy feet what thou dost see
The waters of repentance be,
Which, night and day, I must augment
With tears, like a true penitent,

If haply so my day of grace
Be not yet past; and this lone place,
O'ershadowy, dark, excludeth hence
All thoughts but grief and penitence."

"*Why dost thou weep, thou gentle maid!*
And wherefore in this barren shade
Thy hidden thoughts with sorrow feed?
Can thing so fair repentance need?"

"Oh! I have done a deed of shame,
And tainted is my virgin fame,
And stain'd the beauteous maiden white,
In which my bridal robes were dight."

"*And who the promised spouse, declare:*
And what those bridal garments were."

"Severe and saintly righteousness
Composed the clear white bridal dress;
JESUS, the son of Heaven's high king,
Bought with his blood the marriage-ring.

A wretched sinful creature, I
Deem'd lightly of that sacred tie,
Gave to a treacherous WORLD my heart,
And play'd the foolish wanton's part.

Soon to these murky shades I came,
To hide from the sun's light my shame.
And still I haunt this woody dell,
And bathe me in that healing well,
Whose waters clear have influence
From sin's foul stains the soul to cleanse;
And, night and day, I them augment
With tears, like a true penitent,
Until, due expiation made,
And fit atonement fully paid,
The lord and bridegroom me present,
Where in sweet strains of high consent,
God's throne before, the Seraphim
Shall chant the ecstatic marriage hymn."

"Now Christ restore thee soon"—I said,
And thenceforth all my dream was fled.

QUEEN ORIANA'S DREAM.

ON a bank with roses shaded,
Whose sweet scent the violets aided,
Violets whose breath alone
Yields but feeble smell or none,
(Sweeter bed Jove ne'er reposed on
When his eyes Olympus closed on,)
While o'er head six slaves did hold
Canopy of cloth o' gold,
And two more did music keep,
Which might Juno lull to sleep,
Oriana who was queen
To the mighty Tamerlane,
That was lord of all the land
Between Thrace and Samarchand,
While the noontide fervour beam'd,
Mused herself to sleep, and *dream*'d.

Thus far, in magnific strain,
A young poet sooth'd his vein;
But he had nor prose nor numbers
To express a princess' slumbers.
Youthful Richard had strange fancies,
Was deep versed in old romances,
And could talk whole hours upon
The great cham and Prester John—
Tell the field in which the Sophi
From the Tartar won a trophy—
What he read with such delight of,
Thought he could as eas'ly write of—
But his over-young invention
Kept not pace with brave intention.
Twenty suns did rise and set,
And he could no farther get;
But, unable to proceed,
Made a virtue out of need,
And, his labours wiselier deem'd of,
Did omit *what the queen dream'd of.*

A BALLAD:

NOTING THE DIFFERENCE OF RICH AND POOR, IN THE WAYS OF A RICH NOBLE'S PALACE AND A POOR WORKHOUSE.

To the tune of the "Old and Young Courtier."

In a costly palace Youth goes clad in gold;
In a wretched workhouse Age's limbs are cold:
There they sit, the old men by a shivering fire,
Still close and closer cowering, warmth is their desire.

In a costly palace, when the brave gallants dine,
They have store of good venison, with old Canary wine,
With singing and music to heighten the cheer;
Coarse bits, with grudging, are the pauper's best fare.

In a costly palace Youth is still caress'd
By a train of attendants which laugh at my young lord's
jest;

In a wretched workhouse the contrary prevails:
Does Age begin to prattle, no man heark'neth to his tales.

In a costly palace if the child with a pin
Do but chance to prick a finger, straight the doctor is called in;
In a wretched workhouse men are left to perish
For want of proper cordials, which their old age might cherish.

In a costly palace Youth enjoys his lust;
In a wretched workhouse Age, in corners thrust,
Thinks upon the former days, when he was well to do,
Had children to stand by him, both friends and kinsman too.

In a costly palace Youth his temples hides
With a new-devised peruke that reaches to his sides;
In a wretched workhouse Age's crown is bare,
With a few thin locks just to fence out the cold air.

In peace, as in war, 'tis our young gallant's pride,
To walk, each one i' the streets, with a rapier by his side,
That none to do them injury may have pretence;
Wretched age, in poverty, must brook offence.

HYPOCHONDRIACUS.

By myself walking,
To myself talking,
When as I ruminate
On my untoward fate,
Scarcely seem I
Alone sufficiently,
Black thoughts continually
Crowding my privacy;
They come unbidden,
Like foes at a wedding,
Thrusting their faces
In better guests' places,
Peevish and malecontent,
Clownish, impertinent,
Dashing the merriment,

So in like fashions
Dim cogitations
Follow and haunt me,
Striving to daunt me,
In my heart festering,
In my ears whispering,
"Thy friends are treacherous,
Thy foes are dangerous,
Thy dreams ominous."

Fierce Anthropophagi,
Spectre, diaboli,
What scared St. Antony,
Hobgoblins, lemures,
Dreams of antipodes,
Night-riding incubi
Troubling the fantasy,
All dire illusions
Causing confusions;
Figments heretical,
Scruples fantastical,
Doubts diabolical,
Abaddon vexeth me,
Mahu perplexeth me,
Lucifer teareth me—

Jesu! Maria! liberate nos ab his diris tentationibus Inimici.

A FAREWELL TO TOBACCO.

May the Babylonish curse
Straight confound my stammering verse,
If I can a passage see
In this word-perplexity,
Or a fit expression find,
Or a language to my mind,
(Still the phrase is wide or scant,)
To take leave of thee, GREAT PLANT!
Or in any terms relate
Half my love, or half my hate:
For I hate, yet love thee so,
That, whichever thing I show,

The plain truth will seem to be,
A constrain'd hyperbole,
And the passion to proceed
More from a mistress than a weed.

Sooty retainer to the vine,
Bacchus' black servant, negro fine;
Sorcerer that mak'st us dote upon
Thy begrimmed complexion,
And, for thy pernicious sake,
More and greater oaths to break
Than reclaimed lovers take
'Gainst women: thou thy siege dost lay
Much too in the female way,
While thou suck'st the lab'ring breath
Faster than kisses or than death.

Thou in such a cloud dost bind us
That our worst foes cannot find us,
And ill-fortune, that would thwart us,
Shoots at rovers, shooting at us;
While each man, through thy height'ning steam,
Does like a smoking Etna seem,
And all about us does express
(Fancy and wit in richest dress)
A Sicilian fruitfulness.

Thou through such a mist dost show us,
That our best friends do not know us,
And for those allowed features,
Due to reasonable creatures,
Liken'st us to fell chimeras,
Monsters that, who see us, fear us;
Worse than Cerberus or Geryon,
Or, who first loved a cloud, Ixion.

Bacchus we know, and we allow
His tipsy rites. But what art thou,
That but by reflex canst show
What his deity can do,
As the false Egyptian spell
Aped the true Hebrew miracle?
Some few vapours thou mayst raise,
The weak brain may serve to amaze,
But to the reins and nobler heart
Canst nor life nor heat impart.

Brother of Bacchus, later born,
The old world was sure forlorn,
Wanting thee, that aidest more
The god's victories than before
All his panthers, and the brawls
Of his piping bacchanals.
These, as stale, we disallow,
Or judge of *thee* meant: only thou
His true Indian conquest art;
And for ivy, round his dart
The reformed god now weaves
A finer thyrsus of thy leaves.

Scent to match thy rich perfume,
Chymic art did ne'er presume
Through her quaint alembic strain,
None so sovereign to the brain.
Nature, that did in thee excel,
Framed again no second smell.
Roses, violets, but toys
For the smaller sort of boys,
Or for greener damsels meant;
Thou art the only manly scent.

Stinking'st of the stinking kind,
Filth of the mouth and fog of the mind,
Africa, that brags her foyson,
Breeds no such prodigious poison,
Henbane, nightshade, both together,
Hemlock, aconite—

Nay, rather,
Plant divine, of rarest virtue;
Blisters on the tongue would hurt you.
'Twas but in a sort I blamed thee;
None e'er prosper'd who defamed thee;
Irony all, and feign'd abuse,
Such as perplex'd lovers use,
At a need, when, in despair
To paint forth their fairest fair,
Or, in part, but to express
That exceeding comeliness
Which their fancies doth so strike,
They borrow language of dislike;
And, instead of dearest miss,
Jewel, honey, sweatheart, bliss,

And those forms of old admiring,
Call her cockatrice and siren,
Basilisk, and all that's evil,
Witch, hyena, mermaid, devil,
Ethiop, wench, and blackamoor,
Monkey, ape, and twenty more;
Friendly trait'ress, loving foe—
Not that she is truly so,
But no other way they know
A contentment to express,
Borders so upon excess,
That they do not rightly wot
Whether it be pain or not.

Or, as men constrain'd to part
With what's nearest to their heart,
While their sorrow's at the height,
Lose discrimination quite,
And their hasty wrath let fall,
To appease their frantic gall,
On the darling thing whatever,
Whence they feel it death to sever,
Though it be, as they, perforce,
Guiltless of the sad divorce.

For I must (nor let it grieve thee,
Friendliest of plants, that I must) leave thee.
For thy sake, TOBACCO, I
Would do anything but die,
And but seek to extend my days
Long enough to sing thy praise.
But, as she, who once hath been
A king's consort, is a queen
Ever after, nor will bate
Any tittle of her state,
Though a widow, or divorced,
So I, from thy converse forced,
The old name and style retain,
A right Catharine of Spain;
And a seat, too, 'mong the joys
Of the bless'd tobacco boys;
Where, though I, by sour physician,
Am debarr'd the full fruition
Of thy favours, I may catch
Some collateral sweets, and snatch

Sidelong odours, that give life
Like glances from a neighbour's wife;
And still live in the by-places
And the suburbs of thy graces;
And in thy borders take delight,
An unconquer'd Canaanite.

TO T. L. H.

A CHILD.

MODEL of thy parent dear,
Serious infant worth a fear:
In thy unfaltering visage well
Picturing forth the son of TELL,
When on his forehead, firm and good,
Motionless mark, the apple stood;
Guileless traitor, rebel mild,
Convict unconscious, culprit-child!
Gates that close with iron roar
Have been to thee thy nursery door;
Chains that chink in cheerless cells
Have been thy rattles and thy bells;
Walls contrived for giant sin
Have hemm'd thy faultless weakness in;
Near thy sinless bed black Guilt
Her discordant house hath built,
And fill'd it with her monstrous brood—
Sights by thee not understood—
Sights of fear, and of distress,
That pass a harmless infant's guess!

But the clouds that overcast
Thy young morning may not last.
Soon shall arrive the rescuing hour,
That yields thee up to Nature's power.
Nature, that so late doth greet thee,
Shall in o'erflowing measure meet thee.
She shall recompense with cost
For every lesson thou hast lost.
Then wandering up thy sire's loved hill,*
Thou shalt take thy airy fill

* Hampstead.

Of health and pastime. *Birds shall sing*
For thy delight each May morning.
Mid new-yean'd lambkins thou shalt play,
Hardly less a lamb than they.
Then thy prison's lengthen'd bound
Shall be the horizon skirting round.
And, while thou fill'st thy lap with flowers,
To make amends for wintry hours,
The breeze, the sunshine, and the place,
Shall from thy tender brow efface
Each vestige of untimely care,
That sour restraint had graven there;
And on thy every look impress
A more excelling childishness.

So shall be thy days beguiled,
THORNTON HUNT, my favourite child.

BALLAD.

FROM THE GERMAN.

THE clouds are blackening, the storms threatening,
And ever the forest maketh a moan:
Billows are breaking, the damsel's heart aching,
Thus by herself she singeth alone,
Weeping right plenteously.

"The world is empty, the heart is dead, surely,
In this world plainly all seemeth amiss:
To thy breast, holy one, take now thy little one,
I have had earnest of all earth's bliss,
Living right lovingly."

LINES

ON THE CELEBRATED PICTURE BY LEONARDO DA VINCI, CALLED THE VIRGIN OF THE ROCKS.

While young John runs to greet
The greater infant's feet,
The mother, standing by, with trembling passion
Of devout admiration,
Beholds the engaging mystic play, and pretty adoration;
Nor knows as yet the full event
Of those so low beginnings,
From whence we date our winnings,
But wonders at the intent
Of those new rites, and what that strange child-worship meant.
But at her side
An angel doth abide,
With such a perfect joy
As no dim doubts alloy,
An intuition,
A glory, an amenity,
Passing the dark condition
Of blind humanity,
As if he surely knew
All the bless'd wonders should ensue,
Or he had lately left the upper sphere,
And had read all the sov'reign schemes and divine riddles there.

SONNETS.

I.

TO MISS KELLY.

You are not, Kelly, of the common strain,
That stoop their pride and female honour down
To please that many-headed beast, *the town*,
And vend their lavish smiles and tricks for gain;
By fortune thrown amid the actors' train,
You keep your native dignity of thought;
The plaudits that attend you come unsought,
As tributes due unto your natural vein.
Your tears have passion in them, and a grace
Of genuine freshness, which our hearts avow;
Your smiles are winds whose ways we cannot trace,
That vanish and return we know not how—
And please the better from a pensive face,
A thoughtful eye, and a reflecting brow.

II.

ON THE SIGHT OF SWANS IN KENSINGTON GARDEN.

Queen-bird that sittest on thy shining nest,
And thy young cygnets without sorrow hatchest,
And thou, thou other royal bird that wachest
Lest the white mother wandering feet molest:
Shrined are your offspring in a crystal cradle,
Brighter than Helen's ere she yet had burst
Her shelly prison. They shall be born at first
Strong, active, graceful, perfect, swan-like, able

To tread the land or waters with security.
Unlike poor human births, conceived in sin,
In grief brought forth, both outwardly and in
Confessing weakness, error, and impurity.
Did heavenly creatures own succession's line,
The births of heaven like to yours would shine.

III.

Was it some sweet device of fairy
That mock'd my steps with many a lonely glade,
And fancied wanderings with a fair-hair'd maid?
Have these things been? or what rare witchery,
Impregning with delights the charmed air,
Enlighted up the semblance of a smile
In those fine eyes? methought they spake the while
Soft soothing things, which might enforce despair
To drop the murdering knife, and let go by
His foul resolve. And does the lonely glade
Still court the footsteps of the fair-hair'd maid?
Still in her locks the gales of summer sigh?
While I, forlorn, do wander reckless where,
And mid my wanderings meet no Anna there.

IV.

Methinks how dainty sweet it were, reclined
Beneath the vast outstretching branches high
Of some old wood, in careless sort to lie,
Nor of the busier scenes we left behind
Aught envying. And oh, Anna! mild-eyed maid!
Beloved! I were well content to play
With thy free tresses all a summer's day,
Losing the time beneath the greenwood shade.
Or we might sit and tell some tender tale
Of faithful vows repaid by cruel scorn,
A tale of true love, or of friend forgot;
And I would teach thee, lady, how to rail
In gentle sort on those who practise not
Or love or pity, though of woman born.

V.

When last I roved these winding wood-walks green,
Green winding walks, and shady pathways sweet,
Ofttimes would Anna seek the silent scene,
Shrouding her beauties in the lone retreat.
No more I hear her footsteps in the shade:
Her image only in these pleasant ways
Meets me self-wandering, where in happier days
I held free converse with the fair-hair'd maid.
I pass'd the little cottage which she loved,
The cottage which did once my all contain;
It spake of days which ne'er must come again,
Spake to my heart, and much my heart was moved.
"Now fair befall thee, gentle maid!" I said,
And from the cottage turn'd me with a sigh.

VI.

A timid grace sits trembling in her eye,
As loath to meet the rudeness of men's sight,
Yet shedding a delicious lunar light,
That steeps in kind oblivious ecstasy
The care-crazed mind, like some still melody:
Speaking most plain the thoughts which do possess
Her gentle sprite: peace, and meek quietness,
And innocent loves, and maiden purity:
A look whereof might heal the cruel smart
Of changed friends, or fortune's wrongs unkind;
Might to sweet deeds of mercy move the heart
Of him who hates his brethren of mankind.
Turn'd are those lights from me, who fondly ye
Past joys, vain loves, and buried hopes regret.

VII.

If from my lips some angry accents fell,
Peevish complaint, or harsh reproof unkind,
'Twas but the error of a sickly mind
And troubled thoughts, clouding the purer well
And waters clear of Reason; and for me
Let this my verse the poor atonement be—
My verse, which thou to praise wert ever inclined
Too highly, and with a partial eye to see
No blemish. Thou to me didst ever show
Kindest affection; and would ofttimes lend
An ear to the desponding love-sick lay,
Weeping my sorrows with me, who repay
But ill the mighty debt of love I owe,
Mary, to thee, my sister and my friend.

VIII.

THE FAMILY NAME.

What reason first imposed thee, gentle name,
Name that my father bore, and his sire's sire,
Without reproach? we trace our stream no higher;
And I, a childless man, may end the same.
Perchance some shepherd on Lincolnian plains,
In manners guileless as his own sweet flocks,
Received thee first amid the merry mocks
And arch illusions of his fellow-swains.
Perchance from Salem's holier fields return'd,
With glory gotten on the heads abhorr'd
Of faithless Saracens, some martial lord
Took his meek title, in whose zeal he burn'd.
Whate'er the fount whence thy beginnings came,
No deed of mine shall shame thee, gentle name.

IX.

TO JOHN LAMB, ESQ., OF THE SOUTH-SEA HOUSE.

JOHN, you were figuring in the gay career
Of blooming manhood with a young man's joy,
When I was yet a little peevish boy—
Though time has made the difference disappear
Between our ages, which *then* seem'd so great—
And still by rightful custom you retain
Much of the old authoritative strain,
And keep the elder brother up in state.
Oh! you do well in this. 'Tis man's worst deed
To let the "things that have been" run to waste,
And in the unmeaning present sink the past:
In whose dim glass even now I faintly read
Old buried forms, and faces long ago,
Which you, and I, and one more only know.

X.

OH! I could laugh to hear the midnight wind,
That, rushing on its way with careless sweep,
Scatters the ocean waves. And I could weep
Like to a child. For now to my raised mind
On wings of winds comes wild-eyed Phantasy,
And her rude visions give severe delight.
Oh, winged bark! how swift along the night
Pass'd thy proud keel! nor shall I let go by
Lightly of that drear hour the memory,
When wet and chilly on thy deck I stood,
Unbonneted, and gazed upon the flood,
Even till it seem'd a pleasant thing to die—
To be resolved into th' elemental wave,
Or take my portion with the winds that rave.

XI.

We were two pretty babes, the youngest she,
The youngest, and the loveliest far, I ween,
And Innocence her name. The time has been
We two did love each other's company;
Time was we two had wept to have been apart.
But when, by show of seeming good beguiled,
I left the garb and manners of a child,
And my first love for man's society,
Defiling with the world my virgin heart—
My loved companion dropp'd a tear, and fled,
And hid in deepest shades her awful head.
Beloved, who shall tell me where thou art—
In what delicious Eden to be found—
That I may seek thee the wide world around?

BLANK VERSE.

CHILDHOOD.

In my poor mind it is most sweet to muse
Upon the days gone by; to act in thought
Past seasons o'er, and be again a child;
To sit in fancy on the turf-clad slope,
Down which the child would roll; to pluck gay flowers,
Make posies in the sun, which the child's hand
(Childhood offended soon, soon reconciled)
Would throw away, and straight take up again,
Then fling them to the winds, and o'er the lawn
Bound with so playful and so light a foot,
That the press'd daisy scarce declined her head.

THE GRANDAME.

On the green hill-top,
Hard by the house of prayer, a modest roof,
And not distinguish'd from its neighbour-barn,
Save by a slender-tapering length of spire,
The grandame sleeps. A plain stone barely tells
The name and date to the chance passenger.
For lowly born was she, and long had eat,
Well-earn'd, the bread of service: hers was else
A mounting spirit, one that entertain'd
Scorn of base action, deed dishonourable,
Or aught unseemly. I remember well
Her reverend image: I remember, too,
With what a zeal she served her master's house;
And how the prattling tongue of garrulous age
Delighted to recount the oft-told tale

Or anecdote domestic. Wise she was,
And wondrous skill'd in genealogies,
And could in apt and voluble terms discourse
Of births, of titles, and alliances;
Of marriages, and intermarriages;
Relationship remote, or near of kin;
Of friends offended, family disgraced—
Maiden high-born, but wayward, disobeying
Parental strict injunction, and regardless
Of unmix'd blood, and ancestry remote,
Stooping to wed with one of low degree.
But these are not thy praises; and I wrong
Thy honour'd memory, recording chiefly
Things light or trivial. Better 'twere to tell,
How with a nobler zeal and warmer love
She served her *heavenly Master*. I have seen
That reverend form bent down with age, and pain,
And rankling malady. Yet not for this
Ceased she to praise her Maker, or withdrew
Her trust in him, her faith and humble hope—
So meekly had she learn'd to bear her cross—
For she had studied patience in the school
Of Christ, much comfort she had thence derived,
And was a follower of the NAZARENE.

THE SABBATH BELLS.

THE cheerful Sabbath bells, wherever heard,
Strike pleasant on the sense, most like the voice
Of one who, from the far-off hills, proclaims
Tidings of good to Zion: chiefly when
Their piercing tones fall *sudden* on the ear
Of the contemplant, solitary man,
Whom thoughts abstruse or high have chanced to lure
Forth from the walks of men, revolving oft,
And oft again, hard matter, which eludes
And baffles his pursuit—thought-sick, and tired
Of controversy, where no end appears,
No clew to his research, the lonely man
Half wishes for society again.
Him, thus engaged, the Sabbath bells salute
Sudden! his heart awakes, his ears drink in

The cheering music; his relenting soul
Yearns after all the joys of social life,
And softens with the love of human kind.

FANCY EMPLOYED ON DIVINE SUBJECTS.

The truant Fancy was a wanderer ever,
A lone enthusiast maid. She loves to walk
In the bright visions of empyreal light,
By the green pastures and the fragrant meads,
Where the perpetual flowers of Eden blow;
By crystal streams and by the living waters,
Along whose margin grows the wondrous tree
Whose leaves shall heal the nations; underneath
Whose holy shade a refuge shall be found
From pain and want, and all the ills that wait
On mortal life, from sin and death for ever.

COMPOSED AT MIDNIGHT.

From broken visions of perturbed rest
I wake, and start, and fear to sleep again.
How total a privation of all sounds,
Sights, and familiar objects, man, bird, beast,
Herb, tree, or flower, and prodigal light of heaven
'Twere some relief to catch the drowsy cry
Of the mechanic watchman, or the noise
Of revel reeling home from midnight cups.
Those are the moanings of the dying man,
Who lies in the upper chamber; restless moans,
And interrupted only by a cough
Consumptive, torturing the wasted lungs.
So in the bitterness of death he lies,
And waits in anguish for the morning's light.
What can that do for him, or what restore?
Short taste, faint sense, affecting notices,
And little images of pleasures past,
Of health, and active life—health not yet slain,

Nor the other grace of life, a good name, sold
For sin's black wages. On his tedious bed
He writhes, and turns him from the accusing light,
And finds no comfort in the sun, but says,
"When night comes I shall get a little rest."
Some few groans more, death comes, and there an end.
'Tis darkness and conjecture all beyond;
Weak Nature fears, though Charity must hope,
And Fancy, most licentious on such themes,
Where decent reverence well had kept her mute,
Hath o'erstock'd hell with devils, and brought down,
By her enormous fablings and mad lies,
Discredit on the gospel's serious truths
And salutary fears. The man of parts,
Poet, or prose declaimer, on his couch
Lolling, like one indifferent, fabricates
A heaven of gold, where he, and such as he,
Their heads encompass'd with crowns, their heels
With fine wings garlanded, shall tread the stars
Beneath their feet, heaven's pavement, far removed
From damn'd spirits, and the torturing cries
Of men, his breth'ren, fashioned of the earth,
As he was, nourish'd with the selfsame bread,
Belike his kindred or companions once—
Through everlasting ages now divorced,
In chains and savage torments to repent
Short years of folly on earth. Their groans unheard
In heav'n, the saint nor pity feels, nor care,
For those thus sentenced—pity might disturb
The delicate sense and most divine repose
Of spirits angelical. Bless'd be God,
The measure of his judgments is not fixed
By man's erroneous standard. He discerns
No such inordinate difference and vast
Between the sinner and the saint, to doom
Such disproportion'd fates. Compared with him,
No man on earth is holy called: they best
Stand in his sight approved who at his feet
Their little crowns of virtue cast, and yield
To him of his own works the praise, his due.

JOHN WOODVIL.

A TRAGEDY

CHARACTERS.

SIR WALTER WOODVIL.
JOHN. } *his sons.*
SIMON. }
LOVEL. } *pretended friends of John.*
GRAY. }
SANDFORD. *Sir Walter's old steward.*
MARGARET. *Orphan ward of Sir Walter.*
FOUR GENTLEMEN. *John's riotous companions.*
SERVANTS.

SCENE—*for the most part at Sir Walter's mansion in* DEVONSHIRE; *at other times in the forest of* SHERWOOD.

TIME—*soon after the* RESTORATION.

JOHN WOODVIL.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE.—*A Servant's Apartment in Woodvil Hall.—Servants drinking.—Time, the morning.*

A Song, by DANIEL.

"When the king enjoys his own again."

Peter.—A delicate song. Where didst learn it, fellow?

Daniel.—Even there where thou learnest thy oaths and thy politics—at our master's table. Where else should a serving-man pick up his poor accomplishments?

Martin.—Well spoken, Daniel. Oh, rare Daniel!—his oaths and his politics! excellent!

Francis.—And where didst pick up thy knavery, Daniel?

Peter.—That came to him by inheritance. His family have supplied the shire of Devon time out of mind with good thieves and bad serving-men. All of his race have come into the world without their conscience.

Martin.—Good thieves and bad serving-men! Better and better. I marvel what Daniel hath got to say in reply.

Daniel.—I marvel more when thou wilt say anything to the purpose, thou shallow serving-man, whose swiftest conceit carries thee no higher than to apprehend with difficulty the stale jests of us thy compeers. When was't ever known to club thy own particular jest among us?

Martin.—Most unkind Daniel, to speak such biting things of me!

Francis.—See—if he hath not brought tears into the poor fellow's eyes with the saltness of his rebuke!

Daniel.—No offence, brother Martin—I meant none. 'Tis true, Heaven gives gifts, and withholds them. It has been pleased to bestow upon me a nimble invention to the manufacture of a jest; and upon thee, Martin, an indifferent bad capacity to understand my meaning.

Martin.—*Is* that all? I am content. Here's my hand.

Francis.—Well, I like a little innocent mirth myself, but never could endure bawdry.

Daniel.—*Quod homines tot sententiæ.*

Martin.—And what is that?

Daniel.—'Tis Greek, and argues difference of opinion.

Martin.—I hope there is none between us.

Daniel.—Here's to thee, brother Martin. (*Drinks.*)

Martin.—And to thee, Daniel. (*Drinks.*)

Francis.—And to thee, Peter. (*Drinks.*)

Peter.—Thank you, Francis. And here's to thee. (*Drinks.*)

Martin.—I shall be fuddled anon.

Daniel.—And drunkenness I hold to be a very despicable vice.

All.—Oh! a shocking vice. (*They drink round.*)

Peter.—Inasmuch as it taketh away the understanding.

Daniel.—And makes the eyes red.

Peter.—And the tongue to stammer.

Daniel.—And to blab out secrets.

(*During this conversation they continue drinking.*)

Peter.—Some men do not know an enemy from a friend when they are drunk.

Daniel.—Certainly, sobriety is the health of the soul.

Martin.—Now I know I am going to be drunk.

Daniel.—How canst tell, drybones?

Martin.—Because I begin to be melancholy. That's always a sign.

Francis.—Take care of Martin; he'll topple off his seat else. (*Martin drops asleep.*)

Peter.—Times are greatly altered since young master took upon himself the government of this household.

All.—Greatly altered.

Francis.—I think everything be altered for the better since his majesty's blessed restoration.

Peter.—In Sir Walter's days there was no encouragement given to good housekeeping.

All.—None.

Daniel.—For instance, no possibility of getting drunk before two in the afternoon.

Peter.—Every man his allowance of ale at breakfast—his quart!

All.—A quart!! (*In derision.*)

Daniel.—Nothing left to our own sweet discretions.

Peter.—Whereby it may appear we were treated more like beasts than what we were—discreet and reasonable servingmen.

All.—Like beasts.

Martin.—(*Opening his eyes.*) Like beasts.

Daniel.—To sleep, wagtail!

Francis.—I marvel all this while where the old gentleman has found means to secrete himself. It seems no man has heard of him since the day of the king's return. Can any tell why our young master, being favoured by the court, should not have interest to procure his father's pardon?

Daniel.—Marry, I think 'tis the obstinacy of the old knight, that will not be beholden to the court for his safety.

Martin.—Now that is wilful.

Francis.—But can any tell me the place of his concealment?

Peter.—That cannot I; but I have my conjectures.

Daniel.—Two hundred pounds, as I hear, to the man that shall apprehend him.

Francis.—Well, I have my suspicions.

Peter.—And so have I.

Martin.—And I can keep a secret.

Francis.—(*To Peter.*) Warwickshire, you mean. (*Aside.*)

Peter.—Perhaps not.

Francis.—Nearer, perhaps.

Peter.—I say nothing.

Daniel.—I hope there is none in this company would be mean enough to betray him.

All.—Oh Lord, surely not.

(*They drink to Sir Walter's safety.*)

Francis.—I have often wondered how our master came to be excepted by name in the late Act of Oblivion.

Daniel.—Shall I tell the reason?

All.—Ay, do.

Daniel.—'Tis thought he is no great friend to the present happy establishment.

All.—Oh! monstrous!

Peter.—Fellow-servants, a thought strikes me. Do we, or do we not, come under the penalties of the treason-act, by reason of our being privy to this man's concealment?

All.—Truly, a sad consideration.

To them enters Sandford suddenly.

Sandford.—You well-fed and unprofitable grooms,
Maintained for state, not use;
You lazy feasters at another's cost,
That eat like maggots into an estate,
And do as little work,
Being indeed but foul excrescences,

And no just parts in a well-order'd family;
You base and rascal imitators,
Who act up to the height your master's vices,
But cannot read his virtues in your bond:
Which of you, as I enter'd, spake of betraying?
Was it you, or you, or, thin face, was it you?
Martin.—Whom does he call thin face?
Sandford.—No prating, loon, but tell me who he was,
That I may brain the villain with my staff
That seeks Sir Walter's life!
You miserable men,
With minds more slavish than your slave's estate,
Have you that noble bounty so forgot,
Which took you from the looms and from the ploughs,
Which better had ye follow'd, fed ye, clothed ye,
And entertain'd ye in a worthy service,
Where your best wages was the world's repute,
That thus ye seek his life, by whom ye live?
Have you forgot, too,
How often in old times
Your drunken mirths have stunn'd day's sober ears,
Carousing full cups to Sir Walter's health?
Whom now ye would betray, but that he lie
Out of the reach of your poor treacheries.
This learn from me;
Our master's secret sleeps with trustier tongues
Than will unlock themselves to carls like you.
Go, get you gone, you knaves. Who stirs? this staff
Shall teach you better manners else.
All.—Well, we are going.
Sandford.—And quickly, too, ye had better, for I see
Young mistress Margaret coming this way.
(*Exeunt all but Sandford.*)

Enter Margaret, as in a fright, pursued by a gentleman, who, seeing Sandford, retires, muttering a curse.

SANDFORD. MARGARET.

Sandford.—Good-morrow to my fair mistress. 'Twas a chance
I saw you, lady, so intent was I
On chiding hence these graceless serving-men,
Who cannot break their fast at morning meals
Without debauch and mistimed riotings.
This house hath been a scene of nothing else

But atheist riot and profane excess,
Since my old master quitted all his rights here.
Margaret.—Each day I endure fresh insult from the scorn
Of Woodvil's friends, the uncivil jests
And free discourses of the dissolute men
That haunt this mansion, making me their mirth.
Sandford.—Does my young master know of these affronts?
Margaret.—I cannot tell. Perhaps he has not been told.
Perhaps he might have seen them, if he would.
I have known him more quick-sighted. Let that pass.
All things seem changed, I think. I had a friend—
(I can't but weep to think him alter'd too,)
These things are best forgotten; but I knew
A man, a young man, young, and full of honour,
That would have pick'd a quarrel for a straw,
And fought it out to the extremity,
E'en with the dearest friend he had alive,
On but a bare surmise, a possibility
That Margaret had suffer'd an affront.
Some are too tame that were too splenetic once.
Sandford.—'Twere best he should be *told* of these affronts.
Margaret.—I am the daughter of his father's friend—
Sir Walter's orphan ward.
I am not his servant-maid, that I should wait
The opportunity of a gracious hearing,
Inquire the times and seasons when to put
My peevish prayer up at young Woodvil's feet,
And sue to him for slow redress, who was
Himself a suiter late to Margaret.
I am somewhat proud: and Woodvil taught me pride.
I was his favourite once, his playfellow in infancy,
And joyful mistress of his youth.
None once so pleasant in his eyes as Margaret.
His conscience, his religion, Margaret was;
His dear heart's confessor, a heart within that heart,
And all dear things summ'd up in her alone.
As Margaret smiled or frown'd John lived or died;
His dress, speech, gesture, studies, friendships, all
Being fashion'd to her liking.
His flatteries taught me first this self-esteem,
His flatteries and caresses while he loved.
The world esteem'd her happy, who had won
His heart, who won all hearts;
And ladies envied me the love of Woodvil.
Sandford.—He doth affect the courtier's life too much,
Whose art is to forget;

And that has wrought this seeming change in him,
That was by nature noble.
'Tis these court-plagues, that swarm about our house,
Have done the mischief, making his fancy giddy
With images of state, preferment, place,
Tainting his generous spirits with ambition.
Margaret.—I know not how it is;
A cold protector is John grown to me.
The mistress and presumptive wife of Woodvil
Can never stoop so low to supplicate
A man, her equal, to redress those wrongs
Which he was bound first to prevent,
But which his own neglects have sanction'd rather,
Both sanction'd and provoked: a mark'd neglect,
And strangeness fast'ning bitter on his love,
His love which long has been upon the wane.
For me, I am determined what to do:
To leave this house this night, and lukewarm John,
And trust for food to the earth and Providence.
Sandford.—Oh, lady, have a care
Of these indefinite and spleenbred resolves.
You know not half the dangers that attend
Upon a life of wand'ring, which your thoughts now,
Feeling the swellings of a lofty anger,
To your abused fancy, as 'tis likely,
Portray without its terrors, painting *Her*
And representments of fallacious liberty—
You know not what it is to leave the roof that shelters you.
Margaret.—I have thought on every possible event,
The dangers and discouragements you speak of,
Even till my woman's heart hath ceased to fear them,
And cowardice grows enamour'd of rare accidents.
Nor am I so unfurnish'd as you think
Of practical schemes.
Sandford.—Now God forbid; think twice of this, dear lady.
Margaret.—I pray you spare me, Mr. Sandford,
And once for all believe, nothing can shake my purpose.
Sandford.—But what course have you thought on?
Margaret.—To seek Sir Walter in the forest of Sherwood.
I have letters from young Simon,
Acquainting me with all the circumstances
Of their concealment, place, and manner of life,
And the merry hours they spend in the green haunts
Of Sherwood, nigh which place they have ta'en a house
In the town of Nottingham, and pass for foreigners,

Wearing the dress of Frenchmen.
All which I have perused with so attent
And child-like longings, that to my doting ears
Two sounds now seem like one,
One meaning in two words, Sherwood and liberty.
And, gentle Mr. Sandford,
'Tis you that must provide now
The means of my departure, which, for safety,
Must be in boy's apparel.

Sandford.—Since you will have it so,
(My careful age trembles at all may happen,)
I will engage to furnish you.
I have the keys of the wardrobe, and can fit you
With garments to your size.
I know a suit
Of lively Lincoln green, that shall much grace you
In the wear, being glossy fresh, and worn but seldom.
Young Stephen Woodvil wore them while he lived.
I have the keys of all this house and passages,
And ere daybreak will rise and let you forth.
What things soe'er you have need of I can furnish you;
And will provide a horse and trusty guide,
To bear you on your way to Nottingham.

Margaret.—That once this day and night were fairly past!
For then I'll bid this house and love farewell;
Farewell, sweet Devon; farewell, lukewarm John;
For with the morning's light will Margaret be gone.
Thanks, courteous Mr. Sandford.

(*Exeunt divers ways.*)

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE—*An Apartment in Woodvil Hall.*

JOHN WOODVIL—*alone.*

(*Reading parts of a letter.*)

"WHEN love grows cold, and indifference has usurped upon old esteem, it is no marvel if the world begin to account *that* dependance which hitherto has been esteemed honourable shelter. The course I have taken (in leaving this house, not easily wrought thereunto) seemed to me best for the once-

for-all releasing of yourself (who, in times past, have deserved well of me) from the now daily and not-to-be-endured tribute of forced love and ill-dissembled reluctance of affection.

"MARGARET."

Gone! gone! my girl? so hasty, Margaret?
And never a kiss at parting? shallow loves,
And likings of a ten days' growth, use courtesies,
And show red eyes at parting. Who bids "farewell"
In the same tone he cries "God speed you, sir?"
Or tells of joyful victories at sea,
Where he hath ventures? does not rather muffle
His organs to emit a leaden sound,
To suit the melancholy dull "farewell,"
Which they in heaven not use?—
So peevish, Margaret?
But 'tis the common error of your sex,
When our idolatry slackens, or grows less,
(As who of woman born can keep his faculty
Of admiration, being a decaying faculty,
For ever strain'd to the pitch? or can at pleasure
Make it renewable, as some appetites are,
As, namely, hunger, thirst?) this being the case,
They tax us with neglect, and love grown cold,
Coin plainings of the perfidy of men,
Which into maxims pass, and apothegms
To be retailed in ballads.
I know them all.
They are jealous when our larger hearts receive
More guests than one. (Love in a woman's heart
Being all in one.) For me, I am sure I have room here
For more disturbers of my sleep than one.
Love shall have part, but Love shall not have all.
Ambition, Pleasure, Vanity, all by turns,
Shall lie in my bed, and keep me fresh and waking;
Yet Love not be excluded. Foolish wench,
I could have loved her twenty years to come,
And still have kept my liking. But since 'tis so,
Why, fare thee well, old playfellow! I'll try
To squeeze a tear for old acquaintance' sake.
I shall not grudge so much.

To him enters Lovel.

Lovel.—Bless us, Woodvil! what is the matter? I protest, man, I thought you had been weeping.

Woodvil.—Nothing is the matter, only the wench has forced some water into my eyes, which will quickly disband.

Lovel.—I cannot conceive you.

Woodvil.—Margaret is flown.

Lovel.—Upon what pretence?

Woodvil.—Neglect on my part: which it seems she has had the wit to discover, maugre all my pains to conceal it.

Lovel.—Then you confess the charge?

Woodvil.—To say the truth, my love for her has of late stopped short on this side idolatry.

Lovel.—As all good Christians' should, I think.

Woodvil.—I am sure, I could have loved her still within the limits of warrantable love.

Lovel.—A kind of brotherly affection, I take it.

Woodvil.—We should have made excellent man and wife in time.

Lovel.—A good old couple, when the snows fell, to crowd about a sea-coal fire, and talk over old matters.

Woodvil.—While each should feel, what neither cared to acknowledge, that stories oft repeated may, at last, come to lose some of their grace by the repetition.

Lovel.—Which both of you may yet live long enough to discover. For, take my word for it, Margaret is a bird that will come back to you without a lure.

Woodvil.—Never, never, Lovel. Spite of my levity, with tears I confess it, she was a lady of most confirmed honour, of an unmatchable spirit, and determinate in all virtuous resolutions; not hasty to anticipate an affront, nor slow to feel where just provocation was given.

Lovel.—What made you neglect her, then?

Woodvil.—Mere levity and youthfulness of blood—a malady incident to young men—physicians call it caprice. Nothing else. He that slighted her knew her value: and 'tis odds but, for thy sake, Margaret, John will yet go to his grave a bachelor. (*A noise heard, as of one drunk and singing.*)

Lovel.—Here comes one that will quickly dissipate these humours. (*Enter one drunk.*)

Drunken Man.—Good-morrow to you, gentlemen. Mr. Lovel, I am your humble servant. Honest Jack Woodvil, I will get drunk with you to-morrow.

Woodvil.—And why to-morrow, honest Mr. Freeman?

Drunken Man.—I scent a traitor in that question. A beastly question. Is it not his majesty's birthday? the day, of all days in the year, on which King Charles the Second was graciously pleased to be born. (*Sings.*) "Great pity 'tis such days as those should come but once a year."

Lovel.—Drunk in a morning! foh! how he stinks!

Drunken Man.—And why not drunk in a morning? canst tell, bully?

Woodvil.—Because, being the sweet and tender infancy of the day, methinks it should ill endure such early blightings.

Drunken Man.—I grant you, 'tis in some sort the youth and tender nonage of the day. Youth is bashful, and I give it a cup to encourage it. (*Sings*) "Ale that will make Grimalkin prate." At noon I drink for thirst; at night for fellowship; but, above all, I love to usher in the bashful morning under the auspices of a freshening stoop of liquor. (*Sings*) "Ale in a Saxon rumkin, then, makes valour burgeon in tall men." But, I crave pardon. I fear I keep that gentleman from serious thoughts. There be those that wait for me in the cellar.

Woodvil.—Who are they?

Drunken Man.—Gentleman, my good friends, Cleveland, Delaval, and Turby, I know by this time they are all clamorous for me. (*Exit singing.*)

Woodvil.—This keeping of open house acquaints a man with strange companions.

(*Enter, at another door, three, calling for Harry Freeman.*)

Harry Freeman, Harry Freeman.
He is not here. Let us go look for him.
Where is Freeman?
Where is Harry? (*Exeunt the three, calling for Freeman.*)

Woodvil.—Did you ever see such gentry? (*laughing*) These are they that fatten on ale and tobacco in a morning, drink burnt brandy at noon to promote digestion, and piously conclude with quart bumpers after supper, to prove their loyalty.

Lovel.—Come, shall we adjourn to the Tennis Court?

Woodvil.—No, you shall go with me into the gallery, where I will show you the *Vandyke* I have purchased. "The late king taking leave of his children."

Lovel.—I will but adjust my dress, and attend you. (*Exit Lovel.*)

John Woodvil.—(*alone*) Now Universal England getteth drunk,
For joy that Charles, her monarch, is restored:
And she, that some time wore a saintly mask,
The stale-grown visor from her face doth pluck,
And weareth now a suit of morris-bells,
With which she jingling goes through all her towns and villages.
The baffled factions in their houses skulk;

The commonwealthsman and state machinist,
The cropp'd fanatic and fifth-monarchy-man,
Who heareth of these visionaries now?
They and their dreams have ended. Fools do sing
Where good men yield God thanks; but politic spirits,
Who live by observation, note these changes
Of the popular mind, and thereby serve their ends.
Then why not I? What's Charles to me, or Oliver,
But as my own advancement hangs on one of them?
I to myself am chief. I know
Some shallow mouths cry out that I am smit
With the gauds and show of state, the point of place
And trick of precedence, the ducks and nods
Which weak minds pay to rank. 'Tis not to sit
In place of worship at the royal masks
Their pastimes, plays, and Whitehall banquetings;
For none of these,
Nor yet to be seen whispering with some great one,
Do I affect the favours of the court.
I would be great, for greatness hath great *power*,
And that's the fruit I reach at.
Great spirits ask great play-room. Who could sit
With these prophetic swellings in my breast,
That prick and goad me on, and never cease,
To the fortunes something tells me I was born to?
Who, with such monitors within to stir him,
Would sit him down, with lazy arms across,
A unit, a thing without a name in the state,
A something to be govern'd—not to govern,
A fishing, hawking, hunting, country gentleman? (*Exit.*)

SCENE—*Sherwood Forest.*

SIR WALTER WOODVIL. SIMON WOODVIL.

Disguised as Frenchmen.

Sir Walter.—How fares my boy, Simon, my youngest born,
My hope, my pride, young Woodvil, speak to me?
Some grief untold weighs heavy at thy heart:
I know it by thy altered cheer of late.
Thinkest thy brother plays thy father false?
It is a mad and thriftless prodigal,
Grown proud upon the favours of the court;
Court manners and court fashions he affects,

And in the heat and uncheck'd blood of youth
Harbours a company of riotous men,
All hot and young, court-seekers, like himself,
Most skilful to devour a patrimony;
And these have eat into my old estates,
And these have drain'd thy father's cellars dry;
But these so common faults of youth not named,
(Things which themselves outgrow, left to themselves,)
I know no quality that stains his honour.
My life upon his faith and noble mind,
Son John could never play thy father false.

Simon.—I never thought but nobly of my brother,
Touching his honour and fidelity.
Still I could wish him charier of his person,
And of his time more frugal, than to spend
In riotous living, graceless society,
And mirth unpalatable, hours better employed
(With those persuasive graces nature lent him)
In fervent pleadings for a father's life.

Sir Walter.—I would not owe my life to a jealous court,
Whose shallow policy I know it is,
On some reluctant acts of prudent mercy,
(Not voluntary, but extorted by the times,
In the first tremblings of new-fix'd power,
And recollection smarting from old wounds,)
On these to build a spurious popularity.
Unknowing what free grace or mercy mean,
They fear to punish, therefore do they pardon.
For this cause have I oft forbid my son,
By letters, overtures, open solicitings,
Or closet-tamperings, by gold or fee,
To beg or bargain with the court for my life.

Simon.—And John has ta'en you, father, at your word,
True to the letter of his paternal charge.

Sir Walter.—Well, my good cause and my good conscience, boy,
Shall be for sons to me, if John prove false.
Men die but once, and the opportunity
Of a noble death is not an every-day fortune:
It is a gift which noble spirits pray for.

Simon.—I would not wrong my brother by surmise;
I know him generous, full of gentle qualities,
Incapable of base compliances,
No prodigal in his nature, but affecting
This show of bravery for ambitious ends.
He drinks, for 'tis the humour of the court,

And drink may one day wrest the secret from him,
And pluck you from your hiding-place in the sequel.
Sir Walter.—Fair death shall be my doom, and foul life his.
Till when, we'll live as free in this green forest
As yonder deer, who roam unfearing treason;
Who seem the aborigines of this place,
Or Sherwood theirs by tenure.
Simon.—'Tis said that Robert, Earl of Huntingdon,
Men call'd him Robin Hood, an outlaw bold,
With a merry crew of hunters here did haunt,
Not sparing the king's venison. May one believe
The antique tale?
Sir Walter.—There is much likelihood
Such bandits did in England erst abound,
When polity was young. I have read of the pranks
Of that mad archer, and of the tax he levied
On travellers, whatever their degree,
Baron or knight, whoever pass'd these woods,
Layman or priest, not sparing the bishop's mitre
For spiritual regards; nay, once, 'tis said,
He robb'd the king himself.
Simon.—A perilous man. (*smiling.*)
Sir Walter.—How quietly we live here,
Unread in the world's business,
And take no note of all its slippery changes.
'Twere best we make a world among ourselves,
A little world,
Without the ills and falsehood of the greater;
We two being all the inhabitants of ours,
And kings and subjects both in one.
Simon.—Only the dangerous errors, fond conceits,
Which make the business of that greater world,
Must have no place in ours:
As, namely, riches, honours, birth, place, courtesy,
Good fame and bad, rumours and popular noises,
Books, creeds, opinions, prejudices national,
Humours particular,
Soul-killing lies, and truths that work small good,
Feuds, factions, enmities, relationships,
Loves, hatreds, sympathies, antipathies,
And all the intricate stuff quarrels are made of.
(*Margaret enters in boy's apparel.*)
Sir Walter.—What pretty boy have we here?
Margaret.—*Bon jour, messieurs.* Ye have handsome English faces;

I should have ta'en you else for other two
I came to seek in the forest.
Sir Walter.—Who are they?
Margaret.—A gallant brace of Frenchmen, curled monsieurs,
That, men say, haunt these woods, affecting privacy,
More than the manner of their countrymen.
Simon.—We have here a wonder.
The face is Margaret's face.
Sir Walter.—The face is Margaret's, but the dress the same
My Stephen sometimes wore.
(*To Margaret.*)
Suppose us them; whom do men say we are?
Or know you what you seek?
Margaret.—A worthy pair of exiles,
To whom the politics of state revenge,
In final issue of long civil broils,
Have houseless driven from your native France,
To wander idle in these English woods,
Where now ye live; most part
Thinking on home and all the joys of France,
Where grows the purple vine.
Sir Walter.—These woods, young stranger,
And grassy pastures, which the slim deer loves,
Are they less beauteous than the land of France,
Where grows the purple vine?
Margaret.—I cannot tell.
To an indifferent eye both show alike.
'Tis not the scene,
But all familiar objects in the scene,
Which now ye miss, that constitute a difference.
Ye had a country, exiles, ye have none now;
Friends had ye, and much wealth, ye now have nothing;
Our manners, laws, our customs, all are foreign to you,
I know ye loathe them, cannot learn them readily;
And there is reason, exiles, ye should love
Our English earth less than your land of France,
Where grows the purple vine; where all delights grow
Old custom has made pleasant.
Sir Walter.—You, that are read
So deeply in our story, what are you?
Margaret.—A bare adventurer; in brief, a woman,
That put strange garments on, and came thus far
To seek an ancient friend:
And having spent her stock of idle words,

And feeling some tears coming,
Hastes now to clasp Sir Walter Woodvil's knees,
And beg a boon for Margaret, his poor ward. (*kneeling.*)
Sir Walter.—Not at my feet, Margaret, not at my feet.
Margaret.—Yes, till her suit is answered.
Sir Walter.—Name it.
Margaret.—A little boon, and yet so great a grace
She fears to ask it.
Sir Walter.—Some riddle, Margaret?
Margaret.—No riddle, but a plain request.
Sir Walter.—Name it.
Margaret.—Free liberty of Sherwood,
And leave to take her lot with you in the forest.
Sir Walter.—A scant petition, Margaret, but take it,
Seal'd with an old man's tears.
Rise, daughter of Sir Rowland. (*Addresses them both.*)
Oh you most worthy,
You constant followers of a man proscribed,
Following poor misery in the throat of danger;
Fast servitors to crazed and penniless poverty,
Serving poor poverty without hope of gain;
Kind children of a sire unfortunate;
Green clinging tendrils round a trunk decay'd,
Which needs must bring on you timeless decay;
Fair living forms to a dead carcass join'd;
What shall I say?
Better the dead were gather'd to the dead,
Than death and life in disproportion meet.
Go, seek your fortunes, children.
Simon.—Why, whither should we go?
Sir Walter.—*You* to the court, where now your brother John
Commits a rape on Fortune.
Simon.—Luck to John!
A light heel'd strumpet, when the sport is done.
Sir Walter.—*You* to the sweet society of your equals,
Where the world's fashion smiles on youth and beauty.
Margaret.—Where young men's flatteries cozen young maids' beauty.
There pride oft gets the vantage hand of duty—
There sweet humility withers.
Simon.—Mistress Margaret,
How fared my brother John when you left Devon?
Margaret.—John was well, sir.
Simon.—'Tis now nine months almost
Since I saw home. What new friends has John made?
Or keeps he his first love? I did suspect

Some foul disloyalty. Now do I know,
John has proved false to her, for Margaret weeps.
It is a scurvy brother.

Sir Walter.—Fy upon it.
All men are false, I think. The date of love
Is out, expired, its stories all grown stale,
O'erpast, forgotten, like an antique tale
Of Hero and Leander.

Simon.—I have known some men that are too general-contemplative for the narrow passion. I am in some sort a *general* lover.

Margaret.—In the name of the boy god, who plays at hoodman-blind with the muses, and cares not whom he catches, what is it *you* love?

Simon.—Simply, all things that live,
From the crook'd worm to man's imperial form,
And God-resembling likeness. The poor fly,
That makes short holyday in the sunbeam,
And dies by some child's hand. The feeble bird
With little wings, yet greatly venturous
In the upper sky. The fish in th' other element,
That knows no touch of eloquence. What else?
Yon tall and elegant stag,
Who paints a dancing shadow of his horns
In the water where he drinks.

Margaret.—I myself love all these things, yet so as with a difference: for example, some animals better than others, some men rather than other men; the nightingale before the cuckoo, the swift and graceful palfrey before the slow and asinine mule. Your humour goes to confound all qualities. What sports do you use in the forest?

Simon.—Not many; some few, as thus:—
To see the sun to bed, and to rise,
Like some hot amourist, with glowing eyes,
Bursting the lazy bands of sleep that bound him,
With all his fires and travelling glories round him.
Sometimes the moon on soft night clouds to rest,
Like beauty nestling in a young man's breast,
And all the winking stars, her handmaids, keep
Admiring silence, while those lovers sleep.
Sometimes outstretch'd, in very idleness,
Naught doing, saying little, thinking less,
To view the leaves, thin dancers upon air,
Go eddying round; and small birds, how they fare,
When mother Autumn fills their beaks with corn,
Filch'd from the careless Amalthea's horn;

And how the woods berries and worms provide
Without their pains, when earth has naught beside
To answer their small wants
To view the graceful deer come tripping by,
Then stop, and gaze, then turn, they know not why,
Like bashful younkers in society.
To mark the structure of a plant or tree,
And all fair things of earth, how fair they be.

Margaret.—(*smiling*) And, afterward, them paint in simile.

Sir Walter.—Mistress Margaret will have need of some refreshments. Please you, we have some poor viands within.

Margaret.—Indeed, I stand in need of them.

Sir Walter.—Under the shade of a thick-spreading tree,
Upon the grass, no better carpeting,
We'll eat our noontide meal; and, dinner done,
One of us shall repair to Nottingham,
To seek some safe night-lodging in the town,
Where you may sleep, while here with us you dwell,
By day in the forest, expecting better times,
And gentler habitations, noble Margaret.

Simon.—*Allons*, young Frenchman—

Margaret.—*Allons*, Sir Englishman. The time has been,
I've studied love-lays in the English tongue,
And been enamour'd of rare poesy:
Which now I must unlearn. Henceforth,
Sweet mother-tongue, old English speech, adieu;
For Margaret has got new name and language new. [*Exeunt.*

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE—*An apartment of State in Woodvil Hall.*

Cavaliers drinking.

JOHN WOODVIL, LOVEL, GRAY, *and four more.*

John.—More mirth, I beseech you, gentlemen—
Mr. Gray, you are not merry.

Gray.—More wine, say I, and mirth shall ensue in course. What! we have not yet above three half pints a man to answer for. Brevity is the soul of drinking, as of wit. Despatch, I say. More wine. (Fills.)

First Gentleman.—I entreat you, let there be some order,

some method, in our drinkings. I love to lose my reason with my eyes open, to commit the deed of drunkenness with forethought and deliberation. I love to feel the fumes of the liquid gathering here, like clouds.

Second Gentleman.—And I am for plunging into madness at once. Damn order, and method, and steps, and degrees, that he speaks of. Let confusion have her legitimate work.

Lovel.—I marvel why the poets, who, of all men, methinks, should possess the hottest livers and most empyreal fancies, should affect to see such virtues in cold water.

Gray.—Virtue in cold water! ha—ha—ha!

John.—Because your poet-born hath an internal wine, richer than lippara or Canaries, yet uncrushed from any grapes of earth, unpressed in mortal wine-presses.

Third Gentleman.—What may be the name of this wine?

John.—It hath as many names as qualities. It is denominated indifferently, wit, conceit, invention, inspiration, but its most royal and comprehensive name is *fancy*.

Third Gentleman.—And where keeps he this sovereign liquor?

John.—Its cellars are in the brain, whence your true poet deriveth intoxication at will; while his animal spirits, catching a pride from the quality and neighbourhood of their noble relative, the brain, refuse to be sustained by wines and fermentations of earth.

Third Gentleman.—But is your poet-born always tipsy with this liquor?

John.—He hath his stoopings and reposes; but his proper element is the sky, and in the suburbs of the empyrean.

Third Gentleman.—Is your wine-intellectual so exquisite? henceforth, I, a man of plain conceit, will, in all humility, content my mind with Canaries.

Fourth Gentleman.—I am for a song or a catch. When will the catches come on, the sweet wicked catches?

John.—They cannot be introduced with propriety before midnight. Every man must commit his twenty bumpers first. We are not yet well roused. Frank Lovel, the glass stands with you.

Lovel.—Gentlemen, the duke. (*Fills.*)

All.—The duke. (*They drink.*)

Gray.—Can any tell why his grace, being a Papist—

John.—Pshaw! we will have no questions of state now. Is not this his majesty's birthday?

Gray.—What follows?

John.—That every man should sing, and be joyful, and ask no questions.

Second Gentleman.—Damn politics, they spoil drinking.

Third Gentleman.—For certain, 'tis a blessed monarchy.

Second Gentleman.—The cursed fanatic days we have seen! The times have been when swearing was out of fashion.

Third Gentleman.—And drinking.

First Gentleman.—And wenching.

Gray.—The cursed yeas and forsooths which we have heard uttered, when a man could not rap out an innocent oath, but straight the air was thought to be infected.

Lovel.—'Twas a pleasant trick of the saint, which that trim Puritan *Swear-not-at-all Smooth-speech* used, when his spouse chid him with an oath for committing with his servant-maid, to cause his house to be fumigated with burnt brandy and ends of scripture, to disperse the devil's breath, as he termed it.

All.—Ha—ha—ha!

Gray.—But 'twas pleasanter, when the other saint *Resist-the-devil-and-he-will-flee-from-thee Pureman* was overtaken in the act, to plead an illusio visûs, and maintain his sanctity upon a supposed power in the adversary to counterfeit the shapes of things.

All.—Ha—ha—ha!

John.—Another round, and then let every man devise what trick he can in his fancy for the better manifesting our loyalty this day.

Gray.—Shall we hang a Puritan?

John.—No, that has been done already in Coleman-street.

Second Gentleman.—Or fire a conventicle?

John.—That is stale too.

Third Gentleman.—Or burn the assembly's catechism?

Fourth Gentleman.—Or drink the king's health, every man standing upon his head naked?

Jahn.—(*to Lovel*) We have here some pleasant madness.

Third Gentleman.—Who shall pledge me in a pint bumper, while we drink to the king upon our knees?

Lovel.—Why on our knees, cavalier?

John.—(*smiling*) For more devotion, to be sure. (*To a servant.*) Sirrah, fetch the gilt goblets.

(*The goblets are brought. They drink the king's health kneeling. A shout of general approbation following the first appearance of the goblets.*)

John.—We have here the unchecked virtues of the grape. How the vapours curl upward! It were a life of gods to dwell in such an element: to see, and hear, and talk brave things. Now fy upon these casual potations. That a man's

most exalted reason should depend upon the ignoble fermenting of a fruit which sparrows pluck as well as we!

Gray.—(*aside to Lovel*) Observe how he is ravished.

Lovel.—Vanity and gay thoughts of wine do meet in him and engender madness.

(*While the rest are engaged in a wild kind of talk, John advances to the front of the stage and soliloquises.*)

John.—My spirits turn to fire, they mount so fast.
My joys are turbulent, my hopes show like fruition.
These high and gusty relishes of life, sure,
Have no allayings of mortality in them.
I am too hot now and o'ercapable
For the tedious processes and creeping wisdom
Of human acts, and enterprises of a man.
I want some seasonings of adversity,
Some strokes of the old mortifier calamity,
To take these swellings down divines call vanity.

First Gentleman.—Mr. Woodvil, Mr. Woodvil.

Second Gentleman.—Where is Woodvil?

Gray.—Let him alone. I have seen him in these lunes before. His abstractions must not taint the good mirth.

John.—(*continuing to soliloquize*) Oh for some friend now
To conceal nothing from, to have no secrets.
How fine and noble a thing is confidence,
How reasonable too, and almost godlike!
Fast cement of fast friends, band of society,
Old natural go-between in the world's business,
Where civil life and order, wanting this cement,
Would presently rush back
Into the pristine state of singularity,
And each man stand alone. (*A servant enters.*)

Servant.—Gentlemen, the fireworks are ready.

First Gentleman.—What be they?

Lovel.—The work of London artists, which our host has provided in honour of this day.

Second Gentleman.—'Sdeath, who would part with his wine for a rocket?

Lovel.—Why truly, gentleman, as our kind host has been at the pains to provide this spectacle, we can do no less than be present at it. It will not take up much time. Every man may return fresh and thirsting to his liquor.

Third Gentleman.—There is reason in what he says.

Second Gentleman.—Charge on then, bottle in hand. There's husbandry in that.

(*They go out, singing. Only Lovel remains, who observes Woodvil.*)

John.—(*still talking to himself*) This Lovel here's of a tough honesty,
Would put the rack to the proof. He is not of that sort
Which haunt my house, snorting the liquors,
And when their wisdoms are afloat with wine,
Spend vows as fast as vapours, which go off
Even with the fumes, their fathers. He is one
Whose sober morning actions
Shame not his o'ernight promises;
Talks little, flatters less, and makes no promises;
Why this is he, whom the dark-wisdom'd fate
Might trust her counsels of predestination with,
And the world be no loser.
Why should I fear this man? (*Seeing Lovel.*)
Where is the company gone?

Lovel.—To see the fireworks, where you will be expected to follow. But I perceive you are better engaged.

John.—I have been meditating this half hour
On all the properties of a brave friendship,
The mysteries that are in it, the noble uses,
Its limits withal, and its nice boundaries.
Exempli gratia, how far a man
May lawfully forswear himself for his friend;
What quantity of lies, some of them brave ones,
He may lawfully incur in a friend's behalf;
What oaths, blood-crimes, hereditary quarrels,
Night brawls, fierce words, and duels in the morning,
He need not stick at to maintain his friend's honour or his cause.

Lovel.—I think many men would die for their friend.

John.—Death! why 'tis nothing. We go to it for sport,
To gain a name, or purse, or please a sullen humour,
When one has worn his fortune's livery threadbare,
Or his spleen'd mistress frowns. Husbands will venture on it
To cure the hot fits and cold shakings of jealousy.
A friend, sir, must do more.

Lovel.—Can he do more than die?

John.—To serve a friend this he may do. Pray mark me.
Having a law within, (great spirits feel one,)
He cannot, ought not to be bound by any
Positive laws or ord'nances extern,
But may reject all these: by the law of friendship
He may do so much, be they, indifferently,
Penn'd statutes, or the land's unwritten usages,
As public fame, civil compliances,

Unnamed honour, trust in matter of secrets,
All vows and promises, the feeble mind's religion;
(Binding our morning knowledge to approve
What last night's ignorance spake;)
The ties of blood withal, and prejudice of kin.
Sir, these weak terrors
Must never shake me. I know what belongs
To a worthy friendship. Come, you shall have my confidence.

Lovel.—I hope you think me worthy.

John.—You will smile to hear now—
Sir Walter never has been out of the island.

Lovel.—You amaze me.

John.—That same report of his escape to France
Was a fine tale, forged by myself—
Ha—ha!
I knew it would stagger him.

Lovel.—Pray, give me leave.
Where has he dwelt, how lived, how lain conceal'd?
Sure, I may ask so much.

John.—From place to place, dwelling in no place long,
My brother Simon still hath borne him company,
('Tis a brave youth, I envy him all his virtues.)
Disguised in foreign garb, they pass for Frenchmen,
Two Protestant exiles from the Limosin
Newly arrived. Their dwelling's now at Nottingham,
Where no soul knows them.

Lovel.—Can you assign any reason why a gentleman of Sir Walter's known prudence should expose his person so lightly?

John.—I believe a certain fondness,
A child-like cleaving to the land that gave him birth,
Chains him like fate.

Lovel.—I have known some exiles thus
To linger out the term of the law's indulgence,
To the hazard of being known.

John.—You may suppose sometimes
They use the neighb'ring Sherwood for their sport,
Their exercise and freer recreation.
I see you smile. Pray now, be careful.

Lovel.—I am no babbler, sir; you need not fear me.

John.—But some men have been known to talk in their sleep,
And tell fine tales that way.

Lovel.—I have heard so much. But, to say truth, I mostly sleep alone.

John.—Or drink, sir? do you never drink too freely?
Some men will drink, and tell you all their secrets.
Lovel.—Why do you question me, who know my habits?
John.—I think you are no sot,
No tavern-troubler, worshipper of the grape;
But all men drink sometimes,
And veriest saints at festivals relax,
The marriage of a friend, or a wife's birthday.
Lovel.—How much, sir, may a man with safety drink?
(*Smiling.*)
John.—Sir, three half pints a day is reasonable;
I care not if you never exceed that quantity.
Lovel.—I shall observe it;
On holydays two quarts.
John.—Or stay; you keep no wench?
Lovel.—Ha!
John.—No painted mistress for your private hours?
You keep no whore, sir?
Lovel.—What does he mean?
John.—Who, for a close embrace, a toy of sin,
And amorous praising of your worship's breath,
In rosy junction of four melting lips,
Can kiss out secrets from you? [you!
Lovel.—How strange this passionate behaviour shows in
Sure, you think me some weak one.
John.—Pray, pardon me some fears.
You have now the pledge of a dear father's life.
I am a son—would fain be thought a loving one;
You may allow me some fears: do not despise me
If, in a posture foreign to my spirit,
And by our well-knit friendship, I conjure you,
Touch not Sir Walter's life. (*Kneels.*)
You see these tears. My father's an old man.
Pray let him live.
Lovel.—I must be bold to tell you, these new freedoms
Show most unhandsome in you.
John.—(*rising*) Ha! do you say so?
Sure, you are not grown proud upon my secret?
Ah! now I see it plain. He would be babbling.
No doubt a garrulous and hard-faced traitor—
But I'll not give you leave. (*Draws.*)
Lovel.—What does this madman mean?
John.—Come, sir; here is no subterfuge.
You must kill me, or I kill you.
Lovel.—(*drawing*) Then self-defence plead my excuse.
Have at you, sir. (*They fight.*)

John.—Stay, sir.
I hope you have made your will.
If not, 'tis no great matter.
A broken cavalier has seldom much
He can bequeath: an old worn peruke,
A snuff-box with a picture of Prince Rupert,
A rusty sword he'll swear was used at Naseby,
Though it ne'er came within ten miles of the place,
And, if he's very rich,
A cheap edition of the *Icon Basilike*,
Is mostly all the wealth he dies possess'd of.
You say few prayers, I fancy;
So to it again. (*They fight again. Lovel is disarmed.*)
Lovel.—You had best now take my life. I guess you mean it.
John.—(*musing*) No: men will say I fear'd him if I kill'd him.
Live still, and be a traitor in thy wish,
But never act thy thought, being a coward.
That vengeance, which thy soul shall nightly thirst for,
And this disgrace I've done you cry aloud for,
Still have the will without the power to execute.
So now I leave you,
Feeling a sweet security. No doubt
My secret shall remain a virgin for you!
(*Goes out, smiling in scorn.*)
Lovel.—(*rising*) For once you are mistaken in your man.
The deed you wot of shall forthwith be done.
A bird let loose, a secret out of hand,
Returns not back. Why, then, 'tis baby policy
To menace him who hath it in his keeping.
I will go look for Gray;
Then, northward ho! such tricks as we shall play
Have not been seen, I think, in merry Sherwood
Since the days of Robin Hood, that archer good.

ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE—*An apartment in Woodvil Hall.*

John Woodvil.—(*alone*) A weight of wine lies heavy on my head,
The unconcocted follies of last night.

Now all those jovial fancies and bright hopes,
Children of wine, go off like dreams.
This sick vertigo here
Preacheth of temperance, no sermon better.
These black thoughts and dull melancholy,
That stick like burs to the brain, will they ne'er leave me?
Some men are full of choler when they are drunk;
Some brawl of matter foreign to themselves;
And some, the most resolved fools of all,
Have told their dearest secrets in their cups.

SCENE—*The Forest.*

SIR WALTER.—SIMON.—LOVEL.—GRAY.

Lovel.—Sir, we are sorry we cannot return your *French* salutation.

Gray.—Nor otherwise consider this garb you trust to than as a poor disguise.

Lovel.—Nor use much ceremony with a traitor.

Gray.—Therefore, without much induction of superfluous words, I attach you, Sir Walter Woodvil, of high treason, in the king's name.

Lovel.—And of taking part in the great rebellion against our late lawful sovereign, Charles the First.

Simon.—John has betrayed us, father.

Lovel.—Come, sir, you had best surrender fairly. We know you, sir.

Simon.—Hang ye, villains, ye are two better known than trusted. I have seen those faces before. Are ye not two beggarly retainers, trencher-parasites to John? I think ye rank above his footmen. A sort of bed and board worms—locusts that infest our house; a leprosy that long has hung upon its walls and princely apartments, reaching to fill all the corners of my brother's once noble heart.

Gray.—We are his friends.

Simon.—Fy, sir, do not weep. How these rogues will triumph! Shall I whip off their heads, father? (*Draws.*)

Lovel.—Come, sir, though this show handsome in you, being his son, yet the law must have its course.

Simon.—And if I tell you the law shall not have its course, cannot ye be content? Courage, father; shall such things as these apprehend a man? Which of ye will venture upon me? Will you, Mr. Constable self-elect? or you, sir, with a pimple on your nose, got at Oxford by hard drinking, your only badge of loyality?

Gray.—'Tis a brave youth—I cannot strike at him.

Simon.—Father, why do you cover your face with your hands? Why do you fetch your breath so hard? See, villains, his heart is burst! Oh, villains, he cannot speak. One of you run for some water: quickly, ye knaves; will ye have your throats cut? (*They both slink off.*)

How is it with you, Sir Walter? Look up, sir; the villains are gone. He hears me not, and this deep disgrace of treachery in his son hath touched him even to the death. Oh, most distuned and distempered world, where sons talk their aged fathers into their graves! Garrulous and diseased world, and still empty, rotten, and hollow *talking* world, where good men decay, states turn round in an endless mutability, and still for the worse, nothing is at a stay, nothing abides but vanity, chaotic vanity. Brother, adieu!

There lies the parent stock which gave us life,
Which I will see consign'd with tears to earth.
Leave thou the solemn funeral rites to me,
Grief and a true remorse abide with thee.

(*Bears in the body.*)

SCENE—*Another part of the Forest.*

Margaret.—(*alone*) It was an error merely, and no crime—
An unsuspecting openness in youth,
That from his lips the fatal secret drew,
Which should have slept like one of nature's mysteries,
Unveil'd by any man.
Well, he is dead!
And what should Margaret do in the forest?
Oh, ill-starr'd John!
Oh, Woodvil, man enfeoffed to despair!
Take thy farewell of peace.
Oh never look again to see good days,
Or close thy lids in comfortable nights,
Or ever think a happy thought again,
If what I have heard be true—
Forsaken of the world must Woodvil live,
If he did tell these men.
No tongue must speak to him, no tongue of man
Salute him when he wakes up in a morning;
Or bid "good-night" to John. Who seeks to live
In amity with thee, must for thy sake
Abide the world's reproach. What then?
Shall Margaret join the clamours of the world

Against her friend? Oh, undiscerning world,
That cannot from misfortune separate guilt,
No, not in thought! Oh, never, never, John.
Prepared to share the fortunes of her friend
For better or for worse thy Margaret comes,
To pour into thy wounds a healing love,
And wake the memory of an ancient friendship.
And pardon me, thou spirit of Sir Walter,
Who in compassion to the wretched living,
Have but few tears to waste upon the dead.

SCENE—*Woodvil Hall.*

SANDFORD. MARGARET.

(*As from a Journey.*)

Sandford.—The violence of the sudden mischance hath so wrought in him, who by nature is allied to nothing *less* than a self-debasing humour of dejection, that I have never seen anything more changed and spirit-broken. He hath, with a peremptory resolution, dismissed the partners of his riots and late hours, denied his house and person to their most earnest solicitings, and will be seen by none. He keeps ever alone, and his grief (which is solitary) does not so much seem to possess and govern in him, as it is by him, with a wilfulness of most manifest affection, entertained and cherished.

Margaret.—How bears he up against the common rumour?

Sandford.—With a strange indifference, which whosoever dives not into the niceness of his sorrow might mistake for obdurate and insensate. Yet are the wings of his pride for ever clipped; and yet a virtuous predominance of filial grief is so ever uppermost, that you may discover his thoughts less troubled with conjecturing what living opinions will say, and judge of his deeds, than absorbed and buried with the dead, whom his indiscretion made so.

Margaret.—I knew a greatness ever to be resident in him, to which the admiring eyes of men should look up even in the declining and bankrupt state of his pride. Fain would I see him, fain talk with him; but that a sense of respect, which is violated, when without deliberation we press into the society of the unhappy, checks and holds me back. How think you he would bear my presence?

Sandford.—As of an assured friend, whom in the forgetfulness of his fortunes he passed by. See him you must; but

not to-night. The newness of the sight shall move the bitterest compunction and the truest remorse; but afterward, trust me, dear lady, the happiest effects of a returning peace, and a gracious comfort to him, to you, and all of us.

Margaret.—I think he would not deny me. He hath ere this received farewell letters from his brother, who hath taken a resolution to estrange himself, for a time, from country, friends, and kindred, and to seek occupation for his sad thoughts in travelling in foreign places, where sights remote and extern to himself may draw from him kindly and not painful ruminations.

Sandford.—I was present at the receipt of the letter. The contents seemed to affect him, for a moment, with a more lively passion of grief than he has at any time outwardly shown. He wept with many tears, (which I had not before noted in him,) and appeared to be touched with a sense as of some unkindness; but the cause of their sad separation and divorce quickly recurring, he presently returned to his former inwardness of suffering.

Margaret.—The reproach of his brother's presence at this hour would have been a weight more than could be sustained by his already oppressed and sinking spirit. Meditating upon these intricate and wide-spread sorrows hath brought a heaviness upon me, as of sleep. How goes the night?

Sandford.—An hour past sunset. You shall first refresh your limbs (tired with travel) with meats and some cordial wine, and then betake your no less wearied mind to repose.

Margaret.—A good rest to us all.

Sandford.—Thanks, lady.

ACT THE FIFTH.

JOHN WOODVIL (*dressing.*)

John.—How beautiful (*handling his mourning.*)
And comely do these mourning garments show!
Sure, grief hath set his sacred impress here,
To claim the world's respect! they note so feelingly
By outward types the serious man within.
Alas! what part or portion can I claim
In all the decencies of virtuous sorrow
Which other mourners use? as, namely,

This black attire, abstraction from society,
Good thoughts, and frequent sighs, and seldom smiles,
A cleaving sadness native to the brow,
All sweet condolements of like-grieved friends,
(That steal away the sense of loss almost,)
Men's pity, and good offices
Which enemies themselves do for us then,
Putting their hostile disposition off
As we put off our high thoughts and proud looks.
(*Pauses, and observes the pictures.*)
These pictures must be taken down:
The portraitures of our most ancient family
For nigh three hundred years! How have I listen'd
To hear Sir Walter, with an old man's pride,
Holding me in his arms, a prating boy,
And pointing to the pictures where they hung,
Repeat by course their worthy histories;
(As Hugh de Widville, Walter, first of the name,
And Anne the handsome, Stephen, and famous John:
Telling me I must be his famous John.)
But that was in old times.
Now, no more
Must I grow proud upon our house's pride.
I rather, I, by most unheard-of crimes,
Have backward tainted all their noble blood,
Rased out the memory of an ancient family,
And quite reversed the honours of our house.
Who now shall sit and tell us anecdotes?
The secret history of his own times,
And fashions of the world when he was young:
How England slept out three-and-twenty years,
While Carr and Villiers ruled the baby king:
The costly fancies of the pedant's reign,
Balls, feastings, huntings, shows in allegory,
And beauties of the court of James the First.

Margaret enters.

John.—Comes Margaret here to witness my disgrace?
Oh, lady, I have suffer'd loss
And diminution of my honour's brightness.
You bring some images of old times, Margaret,
That should be now forgotten.
Margaret.—Old times should never be forgotten, John.
I came to talk about them with my friend.
John.—I did refuse you, Margaret, in my pride.

Margaret.—If John rejected Margaret in his pride,
(As who does not, being splenetic, refuse
Sometimes old playfellows,) the spleen being gone,
The offence no longer lives.
Oh, Woodvil, those were happy days,
When we two first began to love. When first,
Under pretence of visiting my father,
(Being then a stripling nigh upon my age,)
You came a wooing to his daughter, John.
Do you remember
With what a coy reserve and seldom speech
(Young maidens must be chary of their speech)
I kept the honours of my maiden pride?
I was your favourite then.

John.—Oh, Margaret, Margaret!
These your submissions to my low estate,
And cleavings to the fates of sunken Woodvil,
Write bitter things 'gainst my unworthiness.
Thou perfect pattern of thy slander'd sex,
Whom miseries of mine could never alienate,
Nor change of fortune shake; whom injuries,
And slights (the worst of injuries) which moved
Thy nature to return scorn with like scorn,
Then when you left in virtuous pride this house,
Could not so separate, but now in this
My day of shame, when all the world forsake me,
You only visit me, love, and forgive me.

Margaret.—Dost yet remember the green arbour, John,
In the south gardens of my father's house,
Where we have seen the summer sun go down,
Exchanging true love's vows without restraint?
And that old wood, you call'd your wilderness,
And vow'd in sport to build a chapel in it,
There dwell

> "Like hermit poor
> In pensive place obscure,"

And tell your Ave Maries by the curls
(Dropping like golden beads) of Margaret's hair;
And make confession seven times a day
Of every thought that stray'd from love and Margaret;
And I, your saint, the penance should appoint—
Believe me, sir, I will not now be laid
Aside, like an old fashion.

John.—Oh, lady, poor and abject are my thoughts,
My pride is cured, my hopes are under clouds,

I have no part in any good man's love,
In all earth's pleasures portion have I none,
I fade and wither in my own esteem,
This earth holds not alive so poor a thing as I am.
I was not always thus. (*Weeps.*)
Margaret.—Thou noble nature,
Which, lion-like, didst awe the inferior creature,
Now trampled on by beasts of basest quality,
My dear heart's lord, life's pride, soul-honour'd John!
Upon her knees (regard her poor request)
Your favourite, once-beloved Margaret, kneels.
John.—What wouldst thou, lady, ever-honour'd Margaret?
Margaret.—That John would think more nobly of himself,
More worthily of high Heaven;
And not for one misfortune, child of chance,
No crime, but unforeseen, and sent to punish
The less offence with image of the greater,
Thereby to work the soul's humility,
(Which end hath happily not been frustrate quite,)
Oh, not for one offence mistrust Heaven's mercy,
Nor quit thy hope of happy days to come—
John yet has many happy days to live;
To live and make atonement.
John.—Excellent lady,
Whose suit hath drawn this softness from my eyes
Not the world's scorn nor falling off of friends
Could ever do. Will you go with me, Margaret?
Margaret.—(*rising*) Go whither, John?
John.—Go in with me,
And pray for the peace of our unquiet minds?
Margaret.—That I will, John. [*Exeunt.*

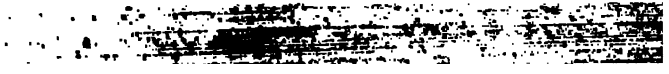
SCENE—*An inner Apartment.*

John is discovered kneeling.—Margaret standing over him.

John.—(*rises*) I cannot bear
To see you waste that youth and excellent beauty,
('Tis now the golden time of the day with you,)
In tending such a broken wretch as I am.
Margaret.—John will break Margaret's heart, if he speak so.
Oh, sir, sir, sir, you are too melancholy,
And I must call it caprice. I am somewhat bold
Perhaps in this. But you are now my patient,
(You know you gave me leave to call you so,)
And I *must* chide these pestilent humours from you.

John.—They are gone.
Mark, love, how cheerfully I speak!
I can smile too, and I almost begin
To understand what kind of creature Hope is.
Margaret.—Now this is better, this mirth becomes you, John.
John.—Yet tell me if I over-act my mirth;
(Being but a novice, I may fall into that error;)
That were a sad indecency, you know.
Margaret.—Nay, never fear.
I will be mistress of your humours,
And you shall frown or smile by the book.
And herein I shall be most peremptory,
Cry, "this shows well, but that inclines to levity;"
"This frown has too much of the Woodvil in it,"
"But that fine sunshine has redeem'd it quite."
John.—How sweetly Margaret robs me of myself!
Margaret.—To give you in your stead a better self!
Such as you were when these eyes first beheld
You mounted on your sprightly steed, White Margery,
Sir Rowland, my father's gift,
And all my maidens gave my heart for lost.
I was a young thing then, being newly come
Home from my convent education, where
Seven years I had wasted in the bosom of France:
Returning home true Protestant, you call'd me
Your little heretic nun. How timid-bashful
Did John salute his love, being newly seen.
Sir Rowland term'd it a rare modesty,
And praised it in a youth.
John.—Now Margaret weeps herself.
(*A noise of bells heard.*)
Margaret.—Hark the bells, John.
John.—Those are the church bells of St. Mary Ottery.
Margaret.—I know it.
John.—Saint Mary Ottery, my native village,
In the sweet shire of Devon.
Those are the bells.
Margaret.—Wilt go to church, John?
John.—I have been there already.
Margaret.—How canst say thou hast been there already?
The bells are only now ringing for morning service, and
hast thou been at church already?
John.—I left my bed betimes, I could not sleep;
And when I rose, I look'd (as my custom is)
From my chamber window, where I can see the sun rise;

And the first object I discern'd
Was the glistering spire of St. Mary Ottery.
Margaret.—Well, John.
John.—Then I remember'd 'twas the Sabbath-day.
Immediately a wish arose in my mind
To go to church and pray with Christian people.
And then I check'd myself, and said to myself,
"Thou hast been a heathen, John, these two years past;
(Not having been at church in all that time;)
And is it fit, that now for the first time
Thou shouldst offend the eyes of Christian people
With a murderer's presence in the house of prayer?
Thou wouldst but discompose their pious thoughts,
And do thyself no good: for how couldst thou pray,
With unwash'd hands, and lips unused to the offices?"
And then I at my own presumption smiled;
And then I wept that I should smile at all,
Having such cause of grief! I wept outright;
Tears like a river flooded all my face,
And I began to pray, and found I could pray;
And still I yearn'd to say my prayers in the church.
"Doubtless," said I, "one might find comfort in it."
So stealing down the stairs, like one that fear'd detection,
Or was about to act unlawful business
At that dead time of dawn,
I flew to the church, and found the doors wide open;
(Whether by negligence I knew not,
Or some peculiar grace to me vouchsafed,
For all things felt like mystery.)
Margaret.—Yes.
John.—So entering in, not without fear,
I pass'd into the family pew,
And covering up my eyes for shame
And deep perception of unworthiness,
Upon the little hassock knelt me down,
Where I so oft had kneel'd,
A docile infant, by Sir Walter's side;
And, thinking so, I wept a second flood
More poignant than the first;
But afterward was greatly comforted.
It seem'd the guilt of blood was passing from me
Even in the act and agony of tears,
And all my sins forgiven.



THE WITCH:

A DRAMATIC SKETCH OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

CHARACTERS.

OLD SERVANT *in the Family of Sir Francis Fairford.*
STRANGER.

Servant.—ONE summer night, Sir Francis, as it chanced,
Was pacing to and fro in the avenue
That westward fronts our house,
Among those aged oaks, said to have been planted
Three hundred years ago
By a neighb'ring prior of the Fairford name.
Being o'ertask'd in thought, he heeded not
The importunate suit of one who stood by the gate,
And begged an alms.
Some say he shoved her rudely from the gate
With angry chiding; but I can never think
(Our master's nature hath a sweetness in it)
That he could use a woman, an old woman,
With such discourtesy: but he refused her—
And better had he met a lion in his path
Than that old woman that night;
For she was one who practised the black arts,
And served the devil, being since burned for witchcraft.
She looked at him as one that meant to blast him:
And with a frightful noise,
('Twas partly like a woman's voice,
And partly like the hissing of a snake,)
She nothing said but this:
(Sir Francis told the words.)

"*A mischief, mischief, mischief,*
And a nine-times-killing curse,

By day and by night, to the caitiff wight,
Who shakes the poor like snakes from his door,
And shuts up the womb of his purse."

And still she cried,

" A mischief,
And a nine-fold-withering curse:
For that shall come to thee that will undo thee,
Both all that thou fearest and worse."

So saying, she departed,
Leaving Sir Francis like a man beneath
Whose feet a scaffolding was suddenly falling;
So he described it.

Stranger.—A terrible curse! What followed?

Servant.—Nothing immediate; but some two months after
Young Philip Fairford suddenly fell sick,
And none could tell what ailed him; for he lay,
And pined, and pined, till all his hair fell off,
And he, that was full-fleshed, became as thin
As a two-months' babe that has been starved in the nursing.
And sure, I think
He bore his death-wound like a little child;
With such rare sweetness of dumb melancholy,
He strove to clothe his agony in smiles,
Which he would force up in his poor pale cheeks,
Like ill-timed guests that had no proper dwelling there;
And when they asked him his complaint, he laid
His hand upon his heart, to show the place
Where Susan came to him a-nights, he said,
And prick'd him with a pin—
And thereupon Sir Francis called to mind
The beggar-witch that stood by the gateway
And begged an alms.

Stranger.—But did the witch confess?

Servant.—All this and more at her death.

Stranger.—I do not love to credit tales of magic.
Heaven's music, which is order, seems unstrung,
And this brave world
(The mystery of God,) unbeautified,
Disorder'd, marr'd, where such strange things are acted.

DEDICATION.

TO THE PUBLISHER.

DEAR MOXON,

I do not know to whom a dedication of these trifles is more properly due than to yourself. You suggested the printing of them. You were desirous of exhibiting a specimen of the *manner* in which publications intrusted to your future care would appear. With more propriety, perhaps, the "Christmas," or some other of your own simple, unpretending compositions, might have served this purpose. But I forget—you have bid a long adieu to the muses. I had on my hands sundry copies of verses written for *albums*—

> "Those books kept by modern young ladies for show,
> Of which their plain grandmothers nothing did know"—

or otherwise floating about in periodicals; which you have chosen in this manner to imbody. I feel little interest in their publication. They are simply—*Advertisement Verses.*

It is not for me nor you to allude in public to the kindness of our honoured friend, under whose auspices you are become a bookseller. May that fine-minded veteran in verse enjoy life long enough to see his patronage justified! I venture to predict that your habits of industry and your cheerful spirit will carry you through the world.

I am, dear Moxon,

Your friend and sincere well-wisher,

CHARLES LAMB.

Enfield, 1st June, 1830.

ALBUM VERSES,

WITH A FEW OTHERS.

IN THE ALBUM OF A CLERGYMAN'S LADY.

An album is a garden, not for show
Planted, but use; where wholesome herbs should grow.
A cabinet of curious porcelain, where
No fancy enters, but what's rich or rare.
A chapel, where mere ornamental things
Are pure as crowns of saints, or angels' wings.
A list of living friends; a holier room
For names of some since mouldering in the tomb,
Whose blooming memories life's cold laws survive;
And, dead elsewhere, they here yet speak and live.
Such, and so tender, should an album be;
And, lady, such I wish this book to thee.

IN THE AUTOGRAPH BOOK OF MRS. SERGEANT W——.

Had I a power, lady, to my will,
You should not want handwritings. I would fill
Your leaves with autographs—resplendent names
Of knights and squires of old, and courtly dames,
Kings, emperors, popes. Next under these should stand
The hands of famous lawyers—a grave band—
Who, in their courts of law or equity,
Have best upheld freedom and property.
These should moot cases in your book, and vie
To show their reading and their sergeantry.

But I have none of these; nor can I send
The notes by Bullen to her tyrant penn'd
In her authentic hand; nor in soft hours
Lines writ by Rosamund in Clifford's bowers.
The lack of curious signatures I moan,
And want the courage to subscribe my own.

IN THE ALBUM OF EDITH S——.

In Christian world Mary the garland wears!
Rebecca sweetens on a Hebrew's ear;
Quakers for pure Priscilla are more clear;
And the light Gaul by amorous Ninon swears.
Among the lesser lights how Lucy shines!
What air of fragrance Rosamond throws round!
How like a hymn doth sweet Cecilia sound!
Of Marthas and of Abigails few lines
Have bragg'd in verse. Of coarsest household stuff
Should homely Joan be fashion'd. But can
You Barbara resist, or Marian?
And is not Clare for love excuse enough?
Yet, by my faith in numbers, I profess,
These all than Saxon Edith please me less.

TO DORA W——,

ON BEING ASKED BY HER FATHER TO WRITE IN HER ALBUM.

An album is a banquet: from the store,
In his intelligential orchard growing,
Your sire might heap your board to overflowing;
One shaking of the tree—'twould ask no more
To set a salad forth, more rich than that
Which Evelyn* in his princely cookery fancied;
Or that more rare, by Eve's neat hands enhanced,
Where a pleased guest, the angelic virtue sat.

* Acetaria, a Discourse of Sallets, by J. E. 1706.

But like the all-grasping founder of the feast,
Whom Nathan to the sinning king did tax,
From his less wealthy neighbours he exacts;
Spares his own flocks, and takes the poor man's beast.
Obedient to his bidding, lo, I am
A zealous, meek, *contributory*

LAMB.

IN THE ALBUM OF ROTHA Q——.

A PASSING glance was all I caught of thee,
In my own Enfield haunts at random roving.
Old friends of ours were with thee, faces loving;
Time short; and salutations cursory,
Though deep and hearty. The familiar name
Of you, yet unfamiliar, raised in me
Thoughts—what the daughter of that man should be
Who call'd our Wordsworth friend. My thoughts did frame
A growing maiden, who, from day to day
Advancing still in stature and in grace,
Would all her lonely father's griefs efface,
And his paternal cares with usury pay.
I still retain the phantom, as I can;
And call the gentle image—Quillinan.

IN THE ALBUM OF CATHARINE ORKNEY.

CANADIA! boast no more the toils
Of hunters for the furry spoils;
Your whitest ermines are but foils
To brighter Catharine Orkney.

That such a flower should ever burst
From climes with rigorous winter cursed!—
We bless you, that so kindly nursed
This flower, this Catharine Orkney.

We envy not your proud display
Of lake—wood—vast Niagara:
Your greatest pride we've borne away.
How spared you Catharine Orkney?

That Wolfe on Heights of Abraham fell
To your reproach no more we tell:
Canadia, you repaid us well
With rearing Catharine Orkney.

Oh, Britain, guard with tenderest care
The charge allotted to your share:
You've scarce a native maid so fair,
So good, as Catharine Orkney.

IN THE ALBUM OF LUCY BARTON.

Little book, surnamed of *white*,
Clean as yet, and fair to sight,
Keep thy attribution right.

Never disproportion'd scrawl,
Ugly blot, that's worse than all,
On thy maiden clearness fall!

In each letter, here design'd,
Let the reader emblem'd find
Neatness of the owner's mind.

Gilded margins count a sin,
Let thy leaves attraction win
By the golden rules within;

Sayings fetch'd from sages old;
Laws which Holy Writ unfold,
Worthy to be graved in gold;

Lighter fancies not excluding;
Blameless wit, with nothing rude in,
Sometimes mildly interluding

Amid strains of graver measure;
Virtue's self hath oft her pleasure
In sweet muses' groves of leisure.

Riddles dark, perplexing sense;
Darker meanings of offence;
What but *shades*—be banish'd hence.

Whitest thoughts in whitest dress,
Candid meanings, best express
Mind of quiet Quakeress.

IN THE ALBUM OF MISS —.

I.

Such goodness in your face doth shine,
With modest look, without design,
That I despair poor pen of mine
Can e'er express it.
To give it words I feebly try;
My spirits fail me to supply
Befitting language for't, and I
Can only bless it!

II.

But stop, rash verse! and don't abuse
A bashful maiden's ear with news
Of her own virtues. She'll refuse
Praise sung so loudly.
Of that same goodness you admire,
The best part is, she don't aspire
To praise—nor of herself desire
To think too proudly.

IN THE ALBUM OF MRS. JANE TOWERS.

Lady unknown, who crav'st from me unknown
The trifle of a verse these leaves to grace,
How shall I find fit matter? with what face
Address a face that ne'er to me was shown?
Thy looks, tones, gesture, manners, and what not,
Conjecturing, I wander in the dark.

I know thee only sister to Charles Clarke!
But at that name my cold muse waxes hot,
And swears that thou art such a one as he,
Warm, laughter loving, with a touch of madness,
Wild, glee-provoking, pouring oil of gladness
From frank heart without guile. And if thou be
The pure reverse of this, and I mistake—
Demure one, I will like thee for his sake.

IN MY OWN ALBUM.

Fresh clad from heaven in robes of white,
A young probationer of light,
Thou wert, my soul, an album bright.

A spotless leaf; but thought and care,
And friend and foe, in foul or fair,
Have "written strange defeatures" there;

And time, with heaviest hand of all,
Like that fierce writing on the wall,
Hath stamp'd sad dates—he can't recall;

And error gilding worst designs—
Like speckled snake that strays and shines—
Betrays his path by crooked lines;

And vice hath left his ugly blot;
And good resolves, a moment hot,
Fairly began—but finish'd not;

And fruitless, late remorse doth trace—
Like Hebrew lore a backward pace—
Her irrecoverable race.

Disjointed numbers; sense unknit;
Huge reams of folly, shreds of wit;
Compose the mingled mass of it.

My scalded eyes no longer brook
Upon this ink-blurr'd thing to look—
Go, shut the leaves, and clasp the book.

ANGEL HELP.*

This rare tablet doth include
Poverty with sanctitude.
Past midnight this poor maid hath spun,
And yet the work is not half done,
Which must supply, from earnings scant,
A feeble bed-rid parent's want.
Her sleep-charged eyes exemption ask,
And holy hands take up the task;
Unseen the rock and spindle ply,
And do her earthly drudgery.
Sleep, saintly poor one, sleep, sleep on;
And, waking, find thy labours done.
Perchance she knows it by her dreams;
Her eye hath caught the golden gleams,
Angelic presence testifying,
That round her everywhere are flying;
Ostents from which she may presume,
That much of Heaven is in the room.
Skirting her own bright hair they run,
And to the sunny add more sun:
Now on that aged face they fix,
Streaming from the crucifix;
The flesh-clogg'd spirit disabusing,
Death-disarming sleeps infusing,
Prelibations, foretastes high,
And equal thoughts to live or die.
Gardener from bright Eden's bower,
Tend with care that lily flower;
To its leaves and root infuse
Heaven's sunshine, heaven's dews.
'Tis a type, and 'tis a pledge
Of a crowning privilege.
Careful as that lily flower,
This maid must keep her precious dower;
Live a sainted maid, or die
Martyr to virginity.

* Suggested by a drawing in the possession of Charles Aders, Esq., in which is represented the legend of a poor female saint, who, having spun past midnight, to maintain a bed-rid mother, has fallen asleep from fatigue, and angels are finishing her work. In another part of the chamber an angel is sending a lily, the emblem of purity.

THE CHRISTENING.

Array'd—a half-angelic sight—
In vests of pure baptismal white,
The mother to the font doth bring
The little helpless nameless thing,
With hushes soft and mild caressing,
At once to get—a name and blessing.
Close by the babe the priest doth stand,
The cleansing water at his hand,
Which must assoil the soul within
From every stain of Adam's sin.
The infant eyes the mystic scenes,
Nor knows what all this wonder means;
And now he smiles, as if to say,
"I am a Christan made this day;"
Now frighted clings to nurse's hold,
Shrinking from the water cold,
Whose virtues, rightly understood,
Are, as Bethesda's waters, good.
Strange words—the world, the flesh, the devil—
Poor babe, what can it know of evil?
But we must silently adore
Mysterious truths, and not explore.
Enough for him in after times,
When he shall read these artless rhymes,
If, looking back upon this day
With quiet conscience, he can say,
"I have in part redeem'd the pledge
Of my baptismal privilege;
And more and more will strive to flee
All which my sponsors kind did then renounce for me."

ON AN INFANT DYING AS SOON AS BORN.

I saw where in the shroud did lurk
A curious frame of nature's work.

A floweret crush'd in the bud,
A nameless piece of babyhood,
Was in her cradle coffin lying;
Extinct, with scarce the sense of dying:
So soon to exchange the imprisoning womb
For darker closets of the tomb!
She did but ope an eye, and put
A clear beam forth, then straight up shut
For the long dark, ne'er more to see
Through glasses of mortality.
Riddle of destiny, who can show
What thy short visit meant, or know
What thy errand here below?
Shall we say that Nature blind
Check'd her hand and changed her mind,
Just when she had exactly wrought
A finish'd pattern without fault?
Could she flag, or could she tire,
Or lack'd she the Promethean fire
(With her nine moons' long working sicken'd)
That should thy little limbs have quicken'd?
Limbs so firm, they seemed to assure
Life of health and days mature:
Woman's self in miniature!
Limbs so fair, they might supply
(Themselves now but cold imagery)
The sculptor to make beauty by.
Or did the stern-eyed fate descry,
That babe, or mother, one must die;
So in mercy left the stock,
And cut the branch; to save the shock
Of young years widow'd; and the pain,
When single state comes back again
To the lone man who, 'reft of wife,
Thenceforward drags a maimed life?
The economy of Heaven is dark;
And wisest clerks have miss'd the mark,
Why human buds, like this, should fall,
More brief than fly ephemeral,
That has his day; while shrivell'd crones
Stiffen with age to stocks and stones;
And crabbed use the conscience sears
In sinners of a hundred years.
Mother's prattle, mother's kiss,
Baby fond, thou ne'er wilt miss.

Rites which custom does impose,
Silver bells and baby clothes;
Coral redder than those lips,
Which pale death did late eclipse;
Music framed for infants' glee,
Whistle never tuned for thee;
Though thou want'st not, thou shalt have them,
Loving hearts were they which gave them.
Let not one be missing; nurse,
See them laid upon the hearse
Of infant slain by doom perverse.
Why should kings and nobles have
Pictured trophies to their grave;
And we, churls, to thee deny
Thy pretty toys with thee to lie,
A more harmless vanity?

THE YOUNG CATECHIST.*

While this tawny Ethiop prayeth,
Painter, who is she that stayeth
By, with skin of whitest lustre,
Sunny locks, a shining cluster,
Saint-like seeming to direct him
To the Power that must protect him?
Is she of the heaven-born three,
Meek Hope, strong Faith, sweet Charity;
Or some cherub?
They you mention
Far transcend my weak invention.
'Tis a simple Christian child,
Missionary young and mild,
From her stock of Scriptural knowledge,
Bible-taught without a college,
Which by reading she could gather,
Teaches him to say Our Father
To the common Parent, who
Colour not respects, nor hue.
White and black in him have part,
Who looks not to the skin, but heart.

* A picture by Henry Meyer, Esq.

SHE IS GOING.

For their elder sister's hair
Martha does a wreath prepare
Of bridal rose, ornate and gay:
To-morrow is the wedding-day:
She is going.

Mary, youngest of the three,
Laughing idler, full of glee,
Arm in arm does fondly chain her,
Thinking, poor trifler, to detain her—
But she's going.

Vex not, maidens, nor regret
Thus to part with Margaret.
Charms like yours can never stay
Long within doors; and one day
You'll be going.

TO A YOUNG FRIEND,

ON HER TWENTY-FIRST BIRTHDAY.

Crown me a cheerful goblet, while I pray
A blessing on thy years, young Isola;
Young, but no more a child. How swift have flown
To me thy girlish times, a woman grown
Beneath my heedless eyes! in vain I rack
My fancy to believe the almanac,
That speaks thee twenty-one. Thou shouldst have still
Remain'd a child, and at thy sovereign will
Gamboll'd about our house, as in times past.
Ungrateful Emma, to grow up so fast,
Hastening to leave thy friends!—for which intent,
Fond runagate, be this thy punishment.
After some thirty years, spent in such bliss
As this earth can afford, where still we miss

Something of joy entire, mayst thou grow old
As we whom thou has left! That wish was cold.
Oh far more aged and wrinkled, till folks say,
Looking upon thee reverend in decay,
"This dame for length of days and virtues rare,
With her respected grandsire may compare."
Grandchild of that respected Isola,
Thou shouldst have had about thee on this day
Kind looks of parents, to congratulate
Their pride grown up to woman's grave estate;
But they have died, and left thee to advance
Thy fortunes how thou mayst, and owe to chance
The friends which nature grudged. And thou wilt find,
Or make such, Emma, if I am not blind
To thee and thy deservings. That last strain
Had too much sorrow in it. Fill again
Another cheerful goblet, while I say,
"Health, and twice health, to our lost Isola."

HARMONY IN UNLIKENESS.

By Enfield lanes and Winchmore's verdant hill,
Two lovely damsels cheer my lonely walk:
The fair Maria, as a vestal still,
And Emma brown, exuberant in talk.
With soft and lady speech the first applies
The mild correctives that to grace belong
To her redundant friend, who her defies
With jest, and mad discourse, and burst of song.
Oh differing pair, yet sweetly thus agreeing,
What music from your happy discord rises,
While your companion hearing each, and seeing,
Nor this, nor that, but both together, prizes;
This lesson teaching, which our souls may strike,
That harmonies may be in things unlike!

WRITTEN AT CAMBRIDGE.

I was not train'd in academic bowers,
And to those learned streams I nothing owe
Which copious from those twin fair founts do flow;
Mine have been anything but studious hours.
Yet can I fancy, wandering mid thy towers,
Myself a nursling, Granta, of thy lap;
My brow seems tight'ning with the doctor's cap,
And I walk *gowned*; feel unusual powers.
Strange forms of logic clothe my admiring speech
Old Ramus' ghost is busy at my brain,
And my scull teems with notions infinite.
Be still, ye reeds of Camus, while I teach
Truths which transcend the searching schoolmen's vein,
And half had stagger'd that stout Stagirite!

TO A CELEBRATED FEMALE PERFORMER IN THE "BLIND BOY."

Rare artist! who with half thy tools, or none,
Canst execute with ease thy curious art,
And press thy powerful'st meanings on the heart,
Unaided by the eye, expression's throne!
While each blind sense, intelligential grown
Beyond its sphere, performs the effect of sight:
Those orbs alone, wanting their proper might,
All motionless and silent seem to moan
The unseemly negligence of nature's hand,
That left them so forlorn. What praise is thine,
Oh mistress of the passions! artist fine!
Who dost our souls against our sense command,
Plucking the horror from a sightless face,
Lending to blank deformity a grace.

WORK.

Who first invented work, and bound the free
And holyday-rejoicing spirit down
To the ever-haunting impunity
Of business in the green fields, and the town—
To plough, loom, anvil, spade—and oh! most sad,
To that dry drudgery at the desk's dead wood!
Who but the being unbless'd, alien from good,
Sabbathless Satan! he who his unglad
Task ever plies mid rotatory burnings,
That round and round incalculably reel—
For wrath divine hath made him like a wheel—
In that red realm from which are no returnings;
Where toiling, and turmoiling, ever and aye
He and his thoughts keep pensive working-day.

LEISURE.

They talk of time, and of time's galling yoke,
That like a mill-stone on man's mind doth press,
Which only works and business can redress:
Of divine leisure such foul lies are spoke,
Wounding her fair gifts with calumnious stroke.
But might I, fed with silent meditation,
Assoiled live from that fiend occupation—
Improbus Labor, which my spirits hath broke—
I'd drink of time's rich cup, and never surfeit:
Fling in more days than went to make the gem,
That crown'd the white top of Methusalem:
Yea, on my weak neck take, and never forfeit,
Like Atlas bearing up the dainty sky,
The heaven-sweet burden of eternity.

DEUS NOBIS HÆC OTIA FECIT.

TO SAMUEL ROGERS, ESQ.

Rogers, of all the men that I have known
But slightly, who have died, your brother's loss
Touch'd me most sensibly. There came across
My mind an image of the cordial tone
Of your fraternal meetings, where a guest
I more than once have sat; and grieve to think,
That of that threefold cord one precious link
By Death's rude hand is sever'd from the rest.
Of our old gentry he appear'd a stem—
A magistrate who, while the evil-doer
He kept in terror, could respect the poor,
And not for every trifle harass them,
As some divine, and laic, too oft do.
This man's a private loss, and public too.

THE GIPSY'S MALISON.

"Suck, baby, suck, mother's love grows by giving,
Drain the sweet founts that only thrive by wasting;
Black manhood comes, when riotous guilty living
Hands thee the cup that shall be death in tasting.

Kiss, baby, kiss, mother's lips shine by kisses,
Choke the warm breath that else would fall in blessings;
Black manhood comes, when turbulent guilty blisses
Tend thee the kiss that poisons mid caressings.

Hang, baby, hang, mother's love loves such forces,
Strain the fond neck that bends still to thy clinging;
Black manhood comes, when violent lawless courses
Leave thee a spectacle in rude air swinging."

So sang a wither'd beldam energetical,
And bann'd the ungiving door with lips prophetical.

TO THE AUTHOR OF POEMS,

PUBLISHED UNDER THE NAME OF BARRY CORNWALL.

Let hate or grosser heats their foulness mask
Under the vizor of a borrowed name;
Let things eschew the light deserving blame:
No cause hast thou to blush for thy sweet task.
"Marcian Colonna" is a dainty book;
And thy "Sicilian Tale" may boldly pass;
Thy "Dream" 'bove all, in which, as in a glass,
On the great world's antique glories we may look.
No longer, then, as "lowly substitute,
Factor, or Proctor, for another's gains,"
Suffer the admiring world to be deceived;
Lest thou thyself, by self of fame bereaved,
Lament too late the lost prize of thy pains,
And heavenly tunes piped through an alien flute.

TO J. S. KNOWLES, ESQ.,

ON HIS TRAGEDY OF VIRGINIUS.

Twelve years ago I knew thee, Knowles, and then
Esteemed you a perfect specimen
Of those fine spirits warm-soul'd Ireland sends
To teach us colder English how a friend's
Quick pulse should beat. I knew you brave, and plain,
Strong-sensed, rough-witted, above fear or gain;
But nothing further had the gift to espy.
Sudden you reappear. With wonder I
Hear my old friend (turn'd Shakspeare) read a scene
Only to *his* inferior in the clean
Passes of pathos: with such fence-like art—
Ere we can see the steel, 'tis in our heart.
Almost without the aid language affords,
Your piece seems wrought. That huffing medium, *words*
(Which in the modern Tamburlaines quite sway
Our shamed souls from their bias,) in your play

We scarce attend to. Hastier passion draws
Our tears on credit: and we find the cause
Some two hours after, spelling o'er again
Those strange few words at ease, that wrought the pain.
Proceed, old friend; and, as the year returns,
Still snatch some new old story from the urns
Of long-dead virtue. We, that knew before
Your worth, may admire, we cannot love you more.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "EVERY-DAY BOOK."

I LIKE you and your book, ingenuous Hone!
In whose capacious, all-embracing leaves
The very marrow of tradition's shown;
And all that history—much that fiction—weaves

By every sort of taste your work is graced.
Vast stores of modern anecdote we find,
With good old story quaintly interlaced—
The theme as various as the reader's mind.

Rome's lie-fraught legends you so truly paint—
Yet kindly—that the half-turn'd Catholic
Scarcely forbears to smile at his own saint,
And cannot curse the candid heretic.

Rags, relics, witches, ghosts, fiends, crowd your page;
Our fathers' mummeries we well-pleased behold,
And, proudly conscious of a purer age,
Forgive some fopperies in the times of old.

Verse-honouring Phœbus, father of bright *days*,
Must needs bestow on you both good and many,
Who, building trophies of his children's praise,
Run their rich Zodiac through, not missing any.

Dan Phœbus loves your book—trust me, friend Hone—
The title only errs, he bids me say:
For while such art, wit, reading, there are shown,
He swears 'tis not a work of *every day*.

TO T. STOTHARD, ESQ.,

ON HIS ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE POEMS OF MR. ROGERS.

Consummate artist, whose undying name
With classic Rogers' shall go down to fame,
Be this thy crowning work! In my young days
How often have I, with a child's fond gaze,
Pored on the pictured wonders* thou hadst done:
Clarissa mournful, and prim Grandison!
All Fielding's, Smollett's heroes, rose to view;
I saw, and I believed the phantoms true.
But, above all, that most romantic tale†
Did o'er my rude credulity prevail,
Where glums and gawries wear mysterious things,
That serve at once for jackets and for wings.
Age, that enfeebles other men's designs,
But heightens thine, and thy free draught refines.
In several ways distinct you make us feel
Graceful as Raphael, as Watteau *genteel*.
Your lights and shades, as Titianesque, we praise;
And warmly wish you Titian's length of days.

TO A FRIEND ON HIS MARRIAGE.

What makes a happy wedlock? What has fate
Not given to thee in thy well-chosen mate?
Good sense—good-humour; these are trivial things,
Dear M——, that each trite encomiast sings.
But she hath these, and more. A mind exempt
From every low-bred passion, where contempt,
Nor envy, nor detraction, ever found
A harbour yet; an understanding sound;
Just views of right and wrong; perception full
Of the deform'd, and of the beautiful,
In life and manners; wit above her sex,
Which, as a gem, her sprightly converse decks;

* Illustrations of the British Novelists. † Peter Wilkins.

Exuberant fancies, prodigal of mirth,
To gladden woodland walk or winter hearth;
A noble nature, conqueror in the strife
Of conflict with a hard discouraging life,
Strengthening the veins of virtue, past the power
Of those whose days have been one silken hour,
Spoil'd fortune's pamper'd offspring; a keen sense
Alike of benefit and of offence,
With reconcilement quick, that instant springs
From the charged heart with nimble angel wings;
While grateful feelings, like a signet sign'd
By a strong hand, seem burnt into her mind.
If these, dear friend, a dowry can confer
Richer than land, thou hast them all in her;
And beauty, which some hold the chiefest boon,
Is in thy bargain for a make-weight thrown.

THE SELF-ENCHANTED.

I HAD a sense in dreams of a beauty rare,
Whom fate had spell-bound, and rooted there,
Stooping, like some enchanted theme,
Over the marge of that crystal stream,
Where the blooming Greek, to Echo blind,
With self-love fond, had to waters pined.
Ages had waked, and ages slept,
And that bending posture still she kept:
For her eyes she may not turn away,
Till a fairer object shall pass that way—
Till an image more beauteous this world can show,
Than her own which she sees in the mirror below.
Pore on, fair creature! for ever pore,
Nor dream to be disenchanted more;
For vain is expectance, and wish is vain,
Till a new Narcissus can come again.

TO LOUISA M——, WHOM I USED TO CALL "MONKEY."

Louisa, serious grown and mild,
I knew you once a romping child,
Obstreperous much, and very wild.
Then you would clamber up my knees,
And strive with every art to tease,
When every art of yours could please.
Those things would scarce be proper now.
But they are gone, I know not how,
And woman's written on your brow.
Time draws his finger o'er the scene;
But I cannot forget between
The thing to me you once have been;
Each sportive sally, wild escape,
The scoff, the banter, and the jape,
And antics of my gamesome ape.

[In a leaf of a quarto edition of the "Lives of the Saints, written in Spanish by the learned and reverend father, Alfonso Villegas, Divine, of the Order of St. Dominic, set forth in English by John Heigham, Anno 1630," bought at a Catholic bookshop in Duke-street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, I found, carefully inserted, a painted flower, seemingly coeval with the book itself; and did not, for some time, discover that it opened in the middle, and was the cover to a very humble draught of a St. Anne, with the Virgin and Child; doubtless the performance of some poor but pious Catholic, whose meditations it assisted.]

Oh lift with reverent hand that tarnish'd flower,
That 'shrines beneath her modest canopy
Memorials dear to Romish piety;
Dim specks, rude shapes, of saints! in fervent hour
The work, perchance, of some meek devotee,
Who, poor in worldly treasures to set forth
The sanctities she worshipp'd to their worth,
In this imperfect tracery might see
Hints, that all heaven did to her sense reveal.
Cheap gifts best fit poor givers. We are told
Of the lone mite, the cup of water cold,
That in their way approved the offerer's zeal.
True love shows costliest where the means are scant;
And, in her reckoning, they *abound* who *want*.

TRANSLATIONS,

FROM THE LATIN OF VINCENT BOURNE.

I.

ON A SEPULCHRAL STATUE OF AN INFANT SLEEPING.

Beautiful infant, who dost keep
Thy posture here, and sleep'st a marble sleep,
May the repose unbroken be,
Which the fine artist's hand hath lent to thee,
While thou enjoy'st, along with it,
That which no art or craft could ever hit,
Or counterfeit to mortal sense,
The heaven-infused sleep of innocence!

II.

THE RIVAL BELLS.

A tuneful challenge rings from either side
Of Thames' fair banks. Thy twice six bells, Saint Bride,
Peal swift and shrill; to which more slow reply
The deep-toned eight of Mary Overy.
Such harmony from the contention flows,
That the divided ear no preference knows;
Between them both disparting music's state,
While one exceeds in number, one in weight.

III.

EPITAPH ON A DOG.

Poor Irus' faithful wolf-dog here I lie,
That wont to tend my old blind master's steps,
His guide and guard; nor, while my service lasted,
Had he occasion for that staff with which
He now goes picking out his path in fear
Over the highways and crossings, but would plant,
Safe in the conduct of my friendly string,
A firm foot forward still, till he had reach'd
His poor seat on some stone, nigh where the tide
Of passers-by in thickest confluence flow'd:
To whom with loud and passionate laments
From morn to eve his dark estate he wail'd.
Nor wail'd to all in vain: some here and there,
The well disposed and good, their pennies gave.
I meantime at his feet obsequious slept;
Not all-asleep in sleep, but heart and ear
Prick'd up at his least motion, to receive
At his kind hand my customary crumbs,
And common portion in his feast of scraps;
Or when night warn'd us homeward, tired and spent
With our long day and tedious beggary.
These were my manners, this my way of life,
Till age and slow disease me overtook,
And sever'd from my sightless master's side.
But lest the grace of so good deeds should die,
Through tracts of years in mute oblivion lost,
This slender tomb of turf hath Irus rear'd,
Cheap monument of no ungrudging hand,
And with short verse inscribed it, to attest,
In long and lasting union to attest,
The virtues of the beggar and his dog.

IV.

THE BALLAD-SINGERS.

WHERE seven fair streets to one tall column* draw,
Two nymphs have ta'en their stand, in hats of straw;
Their yellower necks huge beads of amber grace,
And by their trade they're of the sirens' race:
With cloak loose-pinn'd on each, that has been red,
But, long with dust and dirt discoloured,
Belies its hue; in mud behind, before,
From heel to middle leg becrusted o'er.
One a small infant at the breast does bear;
And one in her right hand her tuneful ware,
Which she would vend. Their station scarce is taken,
When youths and maids flock round. His stall forsaken,
Forth comes a son of Crispin, leathern-capp'd,
Prepared to buy a ballad, if one apt
To move his fancy offers. Crispin's sons
Have, from uncounted time, with ale and buns
Cherish'd the gift of *song*, which sorrow quells;
And, working single in their low-roof'd cells,
Oft cheat the tedium of a winter's night
With anthems warbled in the muses' spight.
Who now hath caught the alarm? the servant-maid
Hath heard a buzz at distance; and afraid
To miss a note, with elbows red comes out.
Leaving his forge to cool, Pyracmon stout
Thrusts in his unwash'd visage. *He* stands by,
Who the hard trade of porterage does ply
With stooping shoulders. What cares he? he sees
The assembled ring, nor heeds his tottering knees,
But pricks his ears up with the hopes of song.
So, while the Bard of Rhodope his wrong
Bewail'd to Proserpine on Thracian strings,
The tasks of gloomy Orcus lost their stings,
The stone-vex'd Sysiphus forgets his load.
Hither and thither from the sevenfold road
Some cart or wagon crosses, which divides
The close-wedged audience; but, as when the tides

* Seven dials.

To ploughing ships give way, the ship being past,
They reunite, so these unite as fast.
The older songstress hitherto hath spent
Her elocution in the argument
Of their great song in *prose;* to wit, the woes
Which maiden true to faithless sailor owes—
Ah! "*Wandering He!*"—which now in loftier *verse*
Pathetic they alternately rehearse.
All gaping wait the event. This critic opes
His right ear to the strain. The other hopes
To catch it better with his left. Long trade
It were to tell, how the deluded maid
A victim fell. And now right greedily
All hands are stretching forth the songs to buy,
That are so tragical; which she, and she,
Deals out, and *sings the while;* nor can there be
A breast so obdurate here, that will hold back
His contributions from the gentle rack
Of music's pleasing torture. Irus' self,
The staff-propp'd beggar, his thin-gotten pelf
Brings out from pouch, where squalid farthings rest,
And boldly claims his ballad with the best.
An old dame only lingers. To her purse
The penny sticks. At length, with harmless curse,
"Give me," she cries. "I'll paste it on my wall,
While the wall lasts, to show what ills befall
Fond hearts, seduced from innocency's way;
How maidens fall, and mariners betray."

V.

TO DAVID COOK,

OF THE PARISH OF SAINT MARGARET'S, WESTMINSTER, WATCHMAN.

For much good-natured verse received from thee,
A loving verse take in return from me.
"Good-morrow to my masters," is your cry;
And to our David "twice as good," say I.
Not Peter's monitor, shrill chanticleer,
Crows the approach of dawn in notes more clear,

Or tells the hours more faithfully. While night
Fills half the world with shadows of affright,
You with your lantern, partner of your round,
Traverse the paths of Margaret's hallow'd bound.
The tales of ghosts which old wives' ears drink up,
The drunkard reeling home from tavern cup,
Nor prowling robber, your firm soul appal;
Arm'd with thy faithful staff, thou slight'st them all.
But if the market gard'ner chance to pass,
Bringing to town his fruit, or early grass,
The gentle salesman you with candour greet,
And with reit'rated "good-mornings" meet.
Announcing your approach by formal bell,
Of nightly weather you the changes tell;
Whether the moon shines, or her head doth steep
In rain-portending clouds. When mortals sleep
In downy rest, you brave the snows and sleet
Of winter; and in alley, or in street,
Relieve your midnight progress with a verse.
What though fastidious Phœbus frown averse
On your didactic strain—indulgent night
With caution hath seal'd up both ears of spite,
And critics sleep while you in staves do sound
The praise of long-dead saints, whose days abound
In wintry months; but Crispin chief proclaim:
Who stirs not at that prince of cobblers' name?
Profuse in loyalty some couplets shine,
And wish long days to all the Brunswick line!
To youths and virgins they chaste lessons read;
Teach wives and husbands how their lives to lead;
Maids to be cleanly, footmen free from vice;
How death at last all ranks doth equalize;
And, in conclusion, pray good years befall,
With store of wealth, your "worthy masters all."
For this and other tokens of good-will,
On boxing day may store of shillings fill
Your Christmas purse; no householder give less,
When at each door your blameless suit you press:
And what you wish to us (it is but reason)
Receive in turn—the compliments o' th' season!

VI.

ON A DEAF AND DUMB ARTIST.*

And hath thy blameless life become
A prey to the devouring tomb?
A more mute silence hast thou known,
A deafness deeper than thine own,
While time was? and no friendly muse,
That mark'd thy life, and knows thy dues,
Repair with quickening verse the breach,
And write thee into light and speech?
The Power that made the tongue restrain'd
Thy lips from lies and speeches feign'd;
Who made the hearing, without wrong
Did rescue thine from siren's song.
He let thee *see* the ways of men,
Which thou with pencil, not with pen,
Careful beholder, down didst note,
And all their motley actions quote,
Thyself unstain'd the while. From look
Or gesture reading, more than *book*,
In letter'd pride thou took'st no part,
Contented with the silent art,
Thyself as silent. Might I be
As speechless, deaf, and good as he!

VII.

NEWTON'S PRINCIPIA.

Great Newton's self, to whom the world's in debt,
Owed to schoolmistress sage his alphabet;
But quickly wiser than his teacher grown,
Discover'd properties to her unknown;
Of A *plus* B, or *minus*, learn'd the use,
Known quantities from unknown to educe;

* Benjamin Ferrers—Died A. D. 1732.

And made—no doubt, to that old dame's surprise—
The Christcross-row his ladder to the skies.
Yet, whatsoe'er geometricians say,
Her lessons were his true PRINCIPIA!

VIII.

THE HOUSEKEEPER.

THE frugal snail, with forecast of repose,
Carries his house with him where'er he goes;
Peeps out—and if their comes a shower of rain,
Retreats to his small domicil amain.
Touch but a tip of him, a horn—'tis well—
He curls up in his sanctuary shell.
He's his own landlord, his own tenant; stay
Long as he will, he dreads no quarter-day.
Himself he boards and lodges; both invites
And feasts himself; sleeps with himself o' nights.
He spares the upholsterer trouble to procure
Chattels; himself is his own furniture,
And his sole riches. Whereso'er he roam—
Knock when you will—he's sure to be at home.

IX.

THE FEMALE ORATORS.

NIGH London's famous bridge, a gate more famed
Stands, or once stood, from old Belinus named,
So judged antiquity; and therein wrongs
A name, allusive strictly to *two tongues*.*
Her school hard by the goddess Rhetoric opes,
And *gratis* deals to oyster-wives her tropes.
With Nereid green, green Nereid disputes,
Replies, rejoins, confutes, and still confutes.
One her coarse sense by metaphors expounds,
And one in literalities abounds;

* *Billingsgate* in the Latin.

In mood and figure these keep up the din;
Words multiply, and every word tells in.
Her hundred throats here bawling Slander strains;
And unclothed Venus to her tongue gives reins
In terms which Demosthenic force outgo,
And baldest jests of foul-mouth'd Cicero.
Right in the midst great Ate keeps her stand,
And from her sovereign station taints the land.
Hence pulpits rail; grave senates learn to jar;
Quacks scold; and Billinsgate infects the bar.

PINDARIC ODE TO THE TREAD-MILL.

I.

Inspire my spirit, spirit of De Foe,
That sang the pillory,
In loftier strains to show
A more sublime machine
Than that where thou wert seen,
With neck outstretch'd and shoulders ill awry,
Courting coarse plaudits from the vile crowds below—
A most unseemly show!

II.

In such a place
Who could expose thy face,
Historiographer of deathless Crusoe!
That paint'st the strife
And all the naked ills of savage life,
Far above Rousseau?
Rather myself had stood
In that ignoble wood,
Bare to the mob, on holyday or high day.
If naught else could atone
For waggish libel,
I swear on the Bible,
I would have spared him for thy sake alone,
Man Friday!

III.

Our ancestors' were sour days,
Great master of romance!

A milder doom had fallen to thy chance
In our days:
Thy sole assignment
Some solitary confinement,
(Not worth thy care a carrot,)
Where in world-hidden cell
Thou thy own Crusoe might have acted well,
Only without the parrot;
By sure experience taught to know
Whether the qualms thou mak'st him feel were truly
such or no.

IV.

But stay! methinks in statelier measure—
A more companionable pleasure—
I see thy steps the mighty tread-mill trace
(The subject of my song,
Delay'd, however, long,)
And some of thine own race,
To keep thee company, thou bring'st with thee along
There with thee go,
Link'd in like sentence,
With regulated pace and footing slow,
Each old acquaintance,
Rogue—harlot—thief—that live to future ages;
Through many a labour'd tome,
Rankly embalm'd in thy too natural pages.
Faith, friend De Foe, thou art quite at home!
Not one of thy great offspring thou dost lack,
From pirate Singleton to pilfering Jack.
Here Flandrian Moll her brazen incest brags;
Vice-stripp'd Roxana, penitent in rags,
There points to Amy, treading equal chimes,
The faithful handmaid to her faithless crimes.

V.

Incompetent my song to raise
To its just height thy praise,
Great mill!
That by thy motion proper
(No thanks to wind, or sail, or working rill)
Grinding that stubborn corn, the human will,
Turn'st out men's consciences,
That were begrimed before, as clean and sweet
As flour from purest wheat,
Into thy hopper.

All reformation short of thee but nonsense is,
Or human, or divine.

VI.

Compared with thee,
What are the labours of that jumping sect,
Which feeble laws connive at rather than respect?
Thou dost not bump,
Or jump,
But *walk* men into virtue; between crime
And slow repentance giving breathing time,
And leisure to be good;
Instructing with discretion demi-reps
How to direct their steps.

VII.

Thou best philosopher made out of wood!
Not that which framed the tub,
Where sat the cynic cub,
With nothing in his bosom sympathetic;
But from those groves derived, I deem,
Where Plato nursed his dream
Of immortality;
Seeing that clearly
Thy system all is merely
Peripatetic.
Thou to thy pupils dost such lessons give
Of how to live
With temperance, sobriety, morality,
(A new art,)
That from thy school, by force of virtuous deeds,
Each Tyro now proceeds
A "Walking Stewart!"

GOING OR GONE.

I.

Fine merry franions,
Wanton companions,
My days are ev'n banyans
With thinking upon ye!

How Death, that last stinger,
Finis-writer, end-bringer,
Has laid his chill finger,
Or is laying on ye.

II.

There's rich Kitty Wheatley,
With footing it featly
That took me completely,
She sleeps in the Kirk House;
And poor Polly Perkin,
Whose dad was still firking
The jolly ale firkin,
She's gone to the work-house;

III.

Fine gard'ner, Ben Carter,
(In ten counties no smarter,)
Has ta'en his departure
For Proserpine's orchards;
And Lily, postillion,
With cheeks of vermilion,
Is one of a million
That fill up the churchyards;

IV.

And, lusty as Dido,
Fat Clemitson's widow
Flits now a small shadow
By Stygian hid ford;
And good Master Clapton
Has thirty years nap't on,
The ground he last hap't on,
Intomb'd by fair Widford;

V.

And gallant Tom Dockwra,
Of Nature's finest crockery,
Now but thin air and mockery,
Lurks by Avernus,
Whose honest grasp of hand
Still, while his life did stand,
At friend's or foe's command,
Almost did burn us.

VI.

Roger de Coverley
Not more good man than he;
Yet has he equally
Push'd for Cocytus,
With drivelling Worral,
And wicked old Dorrell,
'Gainst whom I've a quarrel,
Whose end might affright us!

VII.

Kindly hearts have I known;
Kindly hearts, they are flown;
Here and there if but one
Linger yet uneffaced,
Imbecile tottering elves,
Soon to be wreck'd on shelves,
These scarce are half themselves,
With age and care crazed.

VIII.

But this day Fanny Hutton
Her last dress has put on;
Her fine lessons forgotten,
She died as the dunce died;
And prim Betsy Chambers,
Decay'd in her members,
No longer remembers
Things, as she once did;

IX.

And prudent Miss Wither
Not in jest now doth *wither*,
And soon must go—whither
Nor I well, nor you know;
And flaunting Miss Waller,
That soon must befall her,
Whence none can recall her,
Though proud once as Juno!

FREE THOUGHTS ON SEVERAL EMINENT COMPOSERS.

Some cry up Haydn, some Mozart,
Just as the whim bites; for my part,
I do not care a farthing candle
For either of them, or for Handel.
Cannot a man live free and easy
Without admiring Pergolesi?
Or through the world with comfort go
That never heard of Doctor Blow?
So help me Heaven, I hardly have;
And yet I eat, and drink, and shave
Like other people, if you watch it,
And know no more of stave or crotchet
Than did the primitive Peruvians;
Or those old ante-queer-diluvians
That lived in the unwash'd world with Jubal,
Before that dirty blacksmith Tubal
By stroke on anvil, or by summ'at,
Found out, to his great surprise, the gamut.
I care no more for Cimarosa,
Than he did for Salvator Rosa,
Being no painter; and bad luck
Be mine, if I can bear that Gluck!
Old Tycho Brahe and modern Herschel
Had something in them; but who's Purcel?
The devil with his foot so cloven,
For aught I care, may take Beethoven;
And if the bargain does not suit,
I'll throw him Weber in to boot.
There's not the splitting of a splinter
To choose 'tween him last named and Winter.
Of Doctor Pepusch old Queen Dido
Knew just as much, God knows, as I do.
I would not go four miles to visit
Sebastian Bach; (or Batch, which is it?)
No more I would for Bononcini.
As for Novello, or Rossini,
I shall not say a word to grieve 'em,
Because they're living; so I leave 'em.

THE WIFE'S TRIAL;

OR,

THE INTRUDING WIDOW.

A DRAMATIC POEM.

FOUNDED ON MR. CRABBE'S TALE OF THE "CONFIDANT."

CHARACTERS.

MR. SELBY—*A Wiltshire Gentleman.*
CATHARINE—*Wife to Selby.*
LUCY—*Sister to Selby.*
MRS. FRAMPTON—*A Widow.*

SERVANTS.

SCENE, *at Mr. Selby's house, or in the grounds adjacent.*

THE WIFE'S TRIAL.

SCENE—*A Library.*

MR. SELBY.—CATHARINE.

Selby. Do not too far mistake me, gentlest wife;
I meant to chide your virtues, not yourself,
And those, too, with allowance. I have not
Been bless'd by thy fair side with five white years
Of smooth and even wedlock, now to touch
With any strain of harshness on a string
Hath yielded me such music. 'Twas the quality
Of a too grateful nature in my Catharine,
That to the lame performance of some vows
And common courtesies of man to wife
Attributing too much, hath sometimes seem'd
To esteem as favours what, in that bless'd union,
Are but reciprocal and trivial dues,
As fairly yours as mine: 'twas this I thought
Gently to reprehend.

Catharine. In friendship's barter
The riches we exchange should hold some level
And corresponding worth. Jewels for toys
Demand some thanks thrown in. You took me, sir,
To that bless'd haven of my peace, your bosom,
An orphan founder'd in the world's black storm.
Poor, you have made me rich: from lonely maiden
Your cherish'd and your full-accompanied wife.

Selby. But to divert the subject: Kate too fond,
I would not wrest your meanings; else that word
Accompanied, and full-accompanied too,
Might raise a doubt in some men, that their wives
Haply did think their company too long;
And over-company, we know by proof,
Is worse than no attendance.

Catharine. I must guess,
You speak this of the widow—
Selby. 'Twas a bolt
At random shot; but if it hit, believe me,
I am most sorry to have wounded you
Through a friend's side. I know not how we have swerved
From our first talk. I was to caution you
Against this fault of a too grateful nature:
Which, for some girlish obligations pass'd,
In that relenting season of the heart,
When slightest favours pass for benefits
Of endless binding, would entail upon you
An iron slavery of obsequious duty
To the proud will of an imperious woman.
Catharine. The favours are not slight to her I owe.
Selby. Slight or not slight, the tribute she exacts
Cancels all dues— [*A voice within.*
even now I hear her call you
In such a tone as lordliest mistresses
Expect a slave's attendance. Prithee, Kate,
Let her expect a brace of minutes or so.
Say you are busy. Use her by degrees
To some less hard exactions.
Catharine. I conjure you,
Detain me not. I will return—
Selby. Sweet wife,
Use thy own pleasure— [*Exit Catharine.*
but it troubles me.
A visit of three days, as was pretended,
Spun to ten tedious weeks, and no hint given
When she will go! I would this buxom widow
Were a thought handsomer! I'd fairly try
My Catharine's constancy; make desperate love
In seeming earnest; and raise up such broils,
That she, not I, should be the first to warn
The insidious guest depart. [*Re-enter Catharine.*
So soon return'd!
What was our widow's will?
Catharine. A trifle, sir.
Selby. Some toilet service—to adjust her head,
Or help to stick a pin in the right place—
Catharine. Indeed, 'twas none of these.
Selby. Or new vamp up
The tarnish'd cloak she came in. I have seen her
Demand such service from thee, as her maid,
Twice told to do it, would blush angry red,

And pack her few clothes up. Poor fool! fond slave!
And yet my dearest Kate! This day at least
(It is our wedding-day) we spend in freedom,
And will forget our widow. Philip, our coach—
Why weeps my wife? You know, I promised you
An airing o'er the pleasant Hampshire downs
To the bless'd cottage on the green hill-side,
Where first I told my love. I wonder much
If the crimson parlour hath exchanged its hue
For colours not so welcome. Faded though it be,
It will not show less lovely than the tinge
Of this faint red, contending with the pale,
Where once the full-flush'd health gave to this cheek
An apt resemblance to the fruit's warm side,
That bears my Catharine's name.
Our carriage, Philip.

Enter a Servant.

Now, Robin, what make you here?
Servant. May it please you,
The coachman has driven out with Mrs. Frampton.
Selby. He had no orders—
Servant. None, sir, that I know of,
But from the lady, who expects some letter
At the next post-town.
Selby. Go, Robin. [*Exit servant.*
How is this?
Catharine. I came to tell you so, but fear'd your anger—
Selby. It was ill done, though, of this Mistress Frampton,
This forward widow. But a ride's poor loss
Imports not much. In to your chamber, love,
Where you with music may beguile the hour,
While I am tossing over dusty tomes,
Till our most reasonable friend returns.
Catharine. I am all obedience. [*Exit Catharine.*
Selby. Too obedient, Kate,
And to too many masters. I can hardly
On such a day as this refrain to speak
My sense of this injurious friend, this pest,
This household evil, this close-clinging fiend,
In rough terms to my wife. 'Death, my own servants
Controll'd above me! orders countermanded!
What next? [*Servant enters and announces the sister.*

Enter LUCY.

Sister! I know you are come to welcome
This day's return. 'Twas well done.

Lucy. You seem ruffled.
In years gone by this day was used to be
The smoothest of the year. Your honey turn'd
So soon to gall?
Selby. Gall'd am I, and with cause,
And rid to death, yet cannot get a riddance,
Nay, scarce a ride, by this proud widow's leave.
Lucy. Something you wrote me of a Mistress Frampton.
Selby. She came at first a meek admitted guest,
Pretending a short stay; her whole deportment
Seem'd as of one obliged. A slender trunk,
The wardrobe of her scant and ancient clothing,
Bespoke no more. But in a few days her dress,
Her looks, were proudly changed. And now she flaunts it
In jewels stolen or borrow'd from my wife;
Who owes her some strange service, of what nature
I must be kept in ignorance. Catharine's meek
And gentle spirit cowers beneath her eye,
As spell-bound by some witch.
Lucy. Some mystery hangs on it.
How bears she in her carriage towards yourself?
Selby. As one who fears, and yet not greatly cares
For my displeasure. Sometimes I have thought
A secret glance would tell me she could love,
If I but gave encouragement. Before me
She keeps some moderation; but is never
Closeted with my wife, but in the end
I find my Catharine in briny tears.
From the small chamber, where she first was lodged,
The gradual fiend by specious wriggling arts
Has now ensconced herself in the best part
Of this large mansion; calls the left wing her own;
Commands my servants, equipage. I hear
Her hated tread. What makes she back so soon?

Enter MRS. FRAMPTON.

Mrs. Frampton. Oh, I am jolter'd, bruised, and shook to death,
With your vile Wiltshire roads. The villain Philip
Chose, on my conscience, the perversest tracks,
And stoniest hard lanes in all the county,
Till I was fain get out, and so walk back,
My errand unperform'd at Andover.
Lucy. And I shall love the knave for ever after. [*Aside.*
Mrs. Frampton.—A friend with you!
Selby. My eldest sister Lucy,

Come to congratulate this returning morn.
Sister, my wife's friend, Mistress Frampton.
Mrs. Frampton. Pray,
Be seated. For your brother's sake, you are welcome.
I had thought this day to have spent in homely fashion
With the good couple to whose hospitality
I stand so far indebted. But your coming
Makes it a feast.
Lucy. She does the honours naturally— [*Aside.*
Selby. As if she were the mistress of the house— [*Aside.*
Mrs. Frampton. I love to be at home with loving friends.
To stand on ceremony with obligations
Is to restrain the obliger. That old coach, though,
Of yours jumbles one strangely.
Selby. I shall order
An equipage soon more easy to you, madam—
Lucy. To drive her and her pride to Lucifer,
I hope he means. [*Aside.*
Mrs. Frampton. I must go trim myself; this humbled garb
Would shame a wedding feast. I have your leave
For a short absence?—and your Catharine—
Selby. You'll find her in her closet—
Mrs. Frampton. Fare you well, then. [*Exit.*
Selby. How like you her assurance?
Lucy. Even so well,
That if this widow were my guest, not yours,
She should have coach enough, and scope to ride.
My merry groom should in a trice convey her
To Sarum Plain, and set her down at Stonehenge,
To pick her path through those antiques at leisure;
She should take sample of our Wiltshire flints.
Oh, be not lightly jealous! nor surmise,
That to a wanton bold-faced thing like this
Your modest, shrinking Catharine could impart
Secrets of any worth, especially
Secrets that touch'd your peace. If there be aught,
My life upon't, 'tis but some girlish story
Of first love; which even the boldest wife
Might modestly deny to a husband's ear,
Much more your timid and too sensitive Catharine.
Selby. I think it is no more; and will dismiss
My further fears, if ever I have had such.
Lucy. Shall we go walk? I'd see your gardens, brother;
And how the new trees thrive I recommended.
Your Catharine is engaged now—
Selby. I'll attend you. [Exeunt.

SCENE—*Servants' Hall.*

HOUSEKEEPER, PHILIP, AND OTHERS, *laughing.*

Housekeeper. Our lady's guest, since her short ride, seems
ruffled,
And somewhat in disorder. Philip, Philip,
I do suspect some roguery. Your mad tricks
Will some day cost you a good place, I warrant.
Philip. Good Mistress Jane, our serious housekeeper,
And sage duenna to the maids and scullions,
We must have leave to laugh; our brains are younger,
And undisturb'd with care of keys and pantries.
We are wild things.
Butler. Good Philip, tell us all.
All. Ay, as you live, tell, tell—
Philip. Mad fellows, you shall have it.
The widow's bell rang lustily and loud—
Butler. I think that no one can mistake her ringing.
Waiting-maid. Our lady's ring is soft sweet music to it.
More of entreaty hath it than command.
Philip. I lose my story, if you interrupt me thus.
The bell, I say, rang fiercely; and a voice
More shrill than bell call'd out for "Coachman Philip."
I straight obey'd, as 'tis my name and office.
"Drive me," quoth she, "to the next market-town,
Where I have hope of letters." I made haste.
Put to the horses, saw her fairly coach'd,
And drove her—
Waiting-maid. By the straight high road to Andover,
I guess—
Philip. Pray, warrant things within your knowledge,
Good Mistress Abigail; look to your dressings,
And leave the skill in horses to the coachman.
Butler. He'll have his humour; best not interrupt him.
Philip. 'Tis market day, thought I; and the poor beasts,
Meeting such droves of cattle and of people,
May take a fright; so down the lane I trundled,
Where Goodman Dobson's crazy mare was founder'd,
And where the flints were biggest, and ruts widest,
By ups and downs, and such bone-cracking motions,
We flounder'd on a furlong, till my madam,
In policy, to save the few joints left her,
Betook her to her feet, and there we parted.
All. Ha—ha—ha!

Butler. Hang her, 'tis pity such as she should ride.
Waiting-maid. I think she is a witch; I have tired myself out
With sticking pins in her pillow; still she 'scapes them—
Butler. And I with helping her to mum for Claret,
But never yet could cheat her dainty palate.
Housekeeper. Well, well, she is the guest of our good mistress,
And so should be respected. Though I think
Our master cares not for her company,
He would ill brook we should express so much
By rude discourtesies and short attendance,
Being but servants. (*A bell rings furiously.*) 'Tis her bell speaks now;
Good, good, bestir yourselves: who knows who's wanted?
Butler. But 'twas a merry trick of Philip coachman.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE—*Mrs. Selby's Chamber.*

MRS. FRAMPTON, CATHARINE, *working.*

Mrs. Frampton. I am thinking, child, how contrary our fates
Have traced our lots through life. Another needle,
This works untowardly. An heiress born
To splendid prospects, at our common school
I was as one above you all, not of you;
Had my distinct prerogatives; my freedoms,
Denied to you. Pray, listen—
Catharine. I must hear
What you are pleased to speak! How my heart sinks here!
[*Aside.*
Mrs. Frampton. My chamber to myself, my separate maid,
My coach, and so forth. Not that needle, simple one,
With the great staring eye fit for a Cyclops!
Mine own are not so blinded with their griefs,
But I could make a shift to thread a smaller.
A cable or a camel might go through this,
And never strain for the passage.
Catharine. I will fit you.
Intolerable tyranny! [*Aside.*
Mrs. Frampton. Quick, quick;
You were not once so slack. As I was saying,
Not a young thing among ye but observed me

Above the mistress. Who but I was sought to
In all your dangers, all your little difficulties,
Your girlish scrapes? I was the scape-goat still
To fetch you off; kept all your secrets, some,
Perhaps, since then—

Catharine. No more of that, for mercy,
If you'd not have me, sinking at your feet,
Cleave the cold earth for comfort. [*Kneels.*

Mrs. Frampton. This to me?
This posture to your friend had better suited
The orphan Catharine in her humble school-days
To the *then* rich heiress, than the wife of Selby,
Of wealthy Mr. Selby,
To the poor widow Frampton, sunk as she is.
Come, come,
'Twas something, or 'twas nothing, that I said;
I did not mean to fright you, sweetest bedfellow!
You once were so, but Selby now engrosses you.
I'll make him give you up a night or so;
In faith I will; that we may lie, and talk
Old tricks of schooldays over.

Catharine. Hear me, madam—

Mrs. Frampton. Not by that name. Your friend—

Catharine. My truest friend,
And saviour of my honour!

Mrs. Frampton. This sounds better;
You still shall find me such.

Catharine. That you have graced
Our poor house with your presence hitherto,
Has been my greatest comfort, the sole solace
Of my forlorn and hardly guess'd estate.
You have been pleased
To accept some trivial hospitalities,
In part of payment of a long arrear
I owe to you, no less than for my life.

Mrs. Frampton. You speak my services too large.

Catharine. Nay, less;
For what an abject thing were life to me
Without your silence on my dreadful secret!
And I would wish the leagues we have renew'd
Might be perpetual—

Mrs. Frampton. Have a care, fine madam! [*Aside.*

Catharine. That one house still might hold us. But my husband
Has shown himself of late—

Mrs. Frampton. How, Mistress Selby?

Catharine. Not, not impatient. You misconstrue him.
He honours and he loves, nay, he must love
The friend of his wife's youth. But there are moods
In which—
Mrs. Frampton. I understand you; in which husbands,
And wives that love, may wish to be alone,
To nurse the tender fits of new-born dalliance,
After a five years' wedlock.
Catharine. Was that well,
Or charitably put? do these pale cheeks
Proclaim a wanton blood? this wasting form
Seem a fit theatre for levity
To play his love-tricks on; and act such follies,
As even in affection's first bland moon
Have less of grace than pardon in best wedlocks?
I was about to say, that there are times
When the most frank and sociable man
May surfeit on most loved society,
Preferring loneness rather—
Mrs. Frampton. To my company—
Catharine. Ay, yours, or mine, or any one's. Nay, take
Not this unto yourself. Even in the newness
Of our first married loves 'twas sometimes so.
For solitude, I have heard my Selby say,
Is to the mind as rest to the corporeal functions;
And he would call it oft, the *day's soft sleep.*
Mrs. Frampton. What is your drift? and whereto tends this speech,
Rhetorically labour'd?
Catharine. That you would
Abstain but from our house a month, a week;
I make request but for a single day.
Mrs. Frampton. A month, a week, a day! A single hour
Is every week, and month, and the long year,
And all the years to come! My footing here,
Slipp'd once, recovers never. From the state
Of gilded roofs, attendance, luxuries,
Parks, gardens, sauntering walks, or wholesome rides,
To the bare cottage on the withering moor,
Where I myself am servant to myself,
Or only waited on by blackest thoughts—
I sink, if this be so. No: here I sit.
Catharine. Then I am lost for ever!
[*Sinks at her feet—curtain drops.*

SCENE—*An Apartment contiguous to the last.*

SELBY, *as if listening*

Selby. The sounds have died away. What am I changed to?
What do I here, list'ning like to an abject
Or heartless wittol, that must hear no good,
If he hear aught? "This shall to the ear of your husband."
It was the widow's word. I guess'd some mystery,
And the solution with a vengeance comes.
What can my wife have left untold to me,
That must be told by proxy? I begin
To call in doubt the course of her life pass'd
Under my very eyes. She hath not been good,
Not virtuous, not discreet; she hath not outrun
My wishes still with prompt and meek observance.
Perhaps she is not fair, sweet-voiced; her eyes
Not like the dove's; all this as well may be,
As that she should entreasure up a secret
In the peculiar closet of her breast,
And grudge it to my ear. It is my right
To claim the halves in any truth she owns,
As much as in the babe I have by her;
Upon whose face henceforth I fear to look,
Lest I should fancy in its innocent brow
Some strange shame written.

Enter LUCY.

Sister, an anxious word with you.
From out the chamber, where my wife but now
Held talk with her encroaching friend, I heard
(Not of set purpose hark'ning, but by chance)
A voice of chiding, answer'd by a tone
Of replication, such as the meek dove
Makes when the kite has clutch'd her. The high widow
Was loud and stormy. I distinctly heard
One threat pronounced—"Your husband shall know all."
I am no listener, sister; and I hold
A secret got by such unmanly shift
The pitiful'st of thefts; but what mine ear,
I not intending it, receives perforce,
I count my lawful prize. Some subtle meaning
Lurks in this fiend's behaviour; which, by force
Or fraud, I must make mine.

Lucy. The gentlest means
Are still the wisest. What if you should press
Your wife to a disclosure?
Selby. I have tried
All gentler means; thrown out low hints, which, though
Merely suggestions still, have never fail'd
To blanch her cheek with fears. Roughlier to insist,
Would be to kill where I but meant to heal.
Lucy. Your own description gave that widow out
As one not much precise, nor over coy,
And nice to listen to a suit of love.
What if you feign'd a courtship, putting on,
(To work the secret from her easy faith,)
For honest ends, a most dishonest seeming?
Selby. I see your drift, and partly meet your counsel.
But must it not in me appear prodigious,
To say the least, unnatural, and suspicious,
To move hot love where I have shown cool scorn
And undissembled looks of blank aversion?
Lucy. Vain woman is the dupe of her own charms,
And easily credits the resistless power
That in besieging beauty lies, to cast down
The slight-built fortress of a casual hate.
Selby. I am resolved—
Lucy. Success attend your wooing!
Selby. And I'll about it roundly, my wise sister.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE—*The Library.*

MR. SELBY, MRS. FRAMPTON.

Selby. A fortunate encounter, Mistress Frampton.
My purpose was, if you can spare so much
From your sweet leisure, a few words in private.
Mrs. Frampton. What mean his alter'd tones? These looks to me,
Whose glances yet he has repell'd with coolness?
Is the wind changed? I'll veer about with it,
And meet him in all fashions. [*Aside.*
All my leisure,
Feebly bestow'd upon my kind friends here,
Would not express a tithe of the obligements
I every hour incur.
Selby. No more of that.

I know not why, my wife hath lost of late
Much of her cheerful spirits.
Mrs. Frampton. It was my topic
To-day; and every day, and all day long,
I still am chiding with her. "Child," I said,
And said it pretty roundly—it may be
I was too peremptory—we elder schoolfellows,
Presuming on the advantage of a year
Or two, which, in that tender time, seem'd much,
In after years, much like to elder sisters,
Are prone to keep the authoritative style,
When time has made the difference most ridiculous—
Selby. The observation's shrewd.
Mrs. Frampton. "Child," I was saying,
"If some wives had obtain'd a lot like yours,"
And then, perhaps, I sigh'd, "they would not sit
In corners moping, like to sullen moppets
That want their will, but dry their eyes, and look
Their cheerful husbands in the face," perhaps
I said their Selby's, "with proportion'd looks
Of honest joy."
Selby. You do suspect no jealousy?
Mrs. Frampton. What is his import? Whereto tends his speech? [*Aside.*
Of whom or what should she be jealous, sir?
Selby. I do not know, but women have their fancies;
And underneath a cold indifference,
Or show of some distaste, husbands have mask'd
A growing fondness for a female friend,
Which the wife's eye was sharp enough to see
Before the friend had wit to find it out.
You do not leave us soon?
Mrs. Frampton. 'Tis as I find,
Your Catharine profits by my lessons, sir.
Means this man honest? Is their no deceit? [*Aside.*
Selby. She cannot choose. Well, well, I have been thinking,
And if the matter were to do again—
Mrs. Frampton. What matter, sir?
Selby. This idle bond of wedlock;
These sour-sweet briars, fetters of harsh silk;
I might have made, I do not say a better,
But a more fit choice in a wife.
Mrs. Frampton. The parch'd ground,
In hottest Julys, drinks not in the showers
More greedily than I his words! *Aside.*

Selby. My humour
Is to be frank and jovial; and that man
Affects me best who most reflects me in
My most free temper.
Mrs. Frampton. Were you free to choose,
As jestingly I'll put the supposition,
Without a thought reflecting on your Catharine,
What sort of woman would you make your choice?
Selby. I like your humour, and will meet your jest.
She should be one about my Catharine's age;
But not so old, by some ten years, in gravity.
One that would meet my mirth, sometimes outrun it;
No puling, pining moppet, as you said,
Nor moping maid, that I must still be teaching
The freedoms of a wife all her life after;
But one that, having worn the chain before,
(And worn it lightly, as report gave out,)
Enfranchised from it by her poor fool's death,
Took it not so to heart that I need dread
To die myself, for fear a second time
To wet a widow's eye.
Mrs. Frampton. Some widows, sir,
Hearing you talk so wildly, would be apt
To put strange misconstruction on your words,
As aiming at a Turkish liberty,
Where the free husband hath his several mates,
His Penseroso, his Allegro wife,
To suit his sober or his frolic fit.
Selby. How judge you of that latitude?
Mrs. Frampton. As one
In European customs bred must judge. Had I
Been born a native of the liberal East,
I might have thought as they do. Yet I knew
A married man that took a second wife,
And (the man's circumstances duly weigh'd,
With all their bearings) the considerate world
Nor much approved, nor much condemn'd the deed.
Selby. You move my wonder strangely. Pray proceed.
Mrs. Frampton. An eye of wanton liking he had placed
Upon a widow, who liked him again,
But stood on terms of honourable love,
And scrupled wronging his most virtuous wife—
When to their ears a lucky rumour ran,
That this demure and saintly-seeming wife
Had a first husband living; with the which
Being question'd, she but faintly could deny.

"A priest indeed there was; some words had pass'd,
But scarce amounting to a marriage rite.
Her friend was absent; she supposed him dead;
And, seven years parted, both were free to choose."

Selby. What did the indignant husband? Did he not
With violent handlings stigmatize the cheek
Of the deceiving wife, who had entail'd
Shame on their innocent babe?

Mrs. Frampton. He neither tore
His wife's locks nor his own; but wisely weighing
His own offence with hers in equal poise,
And woman's weakness 'gainst the strength of man,
Came to a calm and witty compromise.
He coolly took his gay-faced widow home,
Made her his second wife; and still the first
Lost few or none of her prerogatives.
The servants call'd her mistress still; she kept
The keys, and had the total ordering
Of the house affairs; and, some slight toys excepted,
Was all a moderate wife would wish to be.

Selby. A tale full of dramatic incident!
And if a man should put it in a play,
How should he name the parties?

Mrs. Frampton. The man's name
Through time I have forgot—the widow's too;
But his first wife's first name, her maiden one,
Was—not unlike to *that* your Catharine bore,
Before she took the honour'd style of Selby.

Selby. A dangerous meaning in your riddle lurks.
One knot is yet unsolved; that told, this strange
And most mysterious drama ends. The name
Of that first husband—

Enter LUCY.

Mrs. Frampton. Sir, your pardon—
The allegory fits your private ear.
Some half hour hence, in the garden's secret walk,
We shall have leisure. [*Exit.*

Selby. Sister, whence come you?

Lucy. From your poor Catharine's chamber, where she droops
In sad presageful thoughts, and sighs, and weeps,
And seems to pray by turns. At times she looks
As she would pour her secret in my bosom—
Then starts, as I have seen her at the mention

Of some immodest act. At her request,
I left her on her knees.
Selby. The fittest posture;
For great has been her fault to Heaven and me.
She married me with a first husband living,
Or not known not to be so, which, in the judgment
Of any but indifferent honesty,
Must be esteem'd the same. The shallow widow,
Caught by my art, under a riddling veil
Too thin to hide her meaning, hath confess'd all.
Your coming in broke off the conference,
When she was ripe to tell the fatal *name*
That seals my wedded doom.
Lucy. Was she so forward
To pour her hateful meanings in your ear
At the first hint?
Selby. Her newly flatter'd hopes
Array'd themselves at first in forms of doubt;
And with a female caution she stood off
A while to read the meaning of my suit,
Which with such honest seeming I enforced,
That her cold scruples soon gave way; and now
She rests prepared, as mistress or as wife,
To seize the place of her betray'd friend—
My much offending, but more suffering Catharine.
Lucy. Into what labyrinth of fearful shapes
My simple project has conducted you—
Were but my wit as skilful to invent
A clew to lead you forth! I call to mind
A letter which your wife received from the Cape
Soon after you were married, with some circumstances
Of mystery too.
Selby. I well remember it.
That letter did confirm the truth (she said)
Of a friend's death, which she had long fear'd true,
But knew not for a fact. A youth of promise
She gave him out—a hot, adventurous spirit—
That had set sail in quest of golden dreams,
And cities in the heart of Central Afric;
But named no names, nor did I care to press
My question further, in the passionate grief
She show'd at the receipt. Might this be he?
Lucy. Tears were not all. When that first shower was past,
With clasp'd hands she raised her eyes to heav'n,
As if in thankfulness for some escape,

Or strange deliverance, in the news implied,
Which sweeten'd that sad news.
Selby. Something of that
I noted also—
Lucy. In her closet once,
Seeking some other trifle, I espied
A ring, in mournful characters deciphering
The death of "Robert Halford, aged two
And twenty." Brother, I am not given
To the confident use of wagers, which I hold
Unseemly in a woman's argument;
But I am strangely tempted now to risk
A thousand pounds out of my patrimony,
(And let my future husband look to it,
If it be lost,) that this immodest widow
Shall name the name that tallies with that ring.
Selby. That wager lost, I should be rich indeed—
Rich in my rescued Kate—rich in my honour,
Which now was bankrupt. Sister, I accept
Your merry wager, with an aching heart
For very fear of winning. 'Tis the hour
That I should meet my widow in the walk,
The south side of the garden. On some pretence
Lure forth my wife that way, that she may witness
Our seeming courtship. Keep us still in sight,
Yourselves unseen; and by some sign I'll give,
(A finger held up, or a kerchief waved,)
You'll know your wager won—then break upon us,
As if by chance.
Lucy. I apprehend your meaning—
Selby. And may you prove a true Cassandra here,
Though my poor acres smart for't, wagering sister. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE—*Mrs. Selby's Chamber.*

MRS. FRAMPTON—CATHARINE.

Mrs. Frampton. Did I express myself in terms so strong?
Catharine. As nothing could have more affrighted me.
Mrs. Frampton. Think it a hurt friend's jest, in retribution
Of a suspected cooling hospitality.
And, for my staying here, or going hence,
(*Now* I remember something of our argument,)
Selby and I can settle that between us.
You look amazed. What if your husband, child,
Himself has courted me to stay?

Catharine. You move
My wonder and my pleasure equally.
Mrs. Frampton. Yes, courted me to stay, waved all objections.
Made it a favour to yourselves; not me,
His troublesome guest, as you surmised. Child, child,
When I recall his flattering welcome, I
Begin to think the burden of my presence
Was—
Catharine. What, for Heaven—
Mrs. Frampton. A little, little spice
Of jealousy—that's all—an honest pretext
No wife need blush for. Say that you should see,
(As oftentimes we widows take such freedoms,
Yet still on this side virtue,) in a jest,
Your husband pat me on the cheek, or steal
A kiss, while you were by—not else, for virtue's sake.
Catharine. I could endure all this, thinking my husband
Meant it in sport—
Mrs. Frampton. But if in downright earnest
(Putting myself out of the question here)
Your Selby, as I partly do suspect,
Own'd a divided heart—
Catharine. My own would break—
Mrs. Frampton. Why, what a blind and witless fool it is,
That will not see its gains, its infinite gains—
Catharine. Gain in a loss,
Or mirth in utter desolation!
Mrs. Frampton. He doting on a face—suppose it mine,
Or any other's tolerably fair—
What need you care about a senseless secret?
Catharine. Perplex'd and fearful woman! I in part
Fathom your dangerous meaning. You have broke
The worse than iron band, fretting the soul,
By which you held me captive. Whether my husband
Is what you gave him out, or your fool'd fancy
But dreams he is so, either way I am free.
Mrs. Frampton. It talks it bravely, blazons out its shame;
A very heroine while on its knees;
Rowe's Penitent, an absolute Calista!
Catharine. Not to thy wretched self these tears are falling;
But to my husband and offended Heaven
Some drops are due—and then I sleep in peace,
Relieved from frightful dreams, my dreams though sad. [*Exit.*
Mrs. Frampton. I have gone too far. Who knows but in this mood

She may forestall my story, win on Selby
By a frank confession?—and the time draws on
For our appointed meeting. The game's desperate
For which I play. A moment's difference
May make it hers or mine. I fly to meet him. [*Exit.*

SCENE—*A Garden.*

MR. SELBY.—MRS. FRAMPTON.

Selby. I am not so ill a guesser, Mrs. Frampton,
Not to conjecture that some passages
In your unfinish'd story, rightly interpreted,
Glanced at my bosom's peace;
You knew my wife?
Mrs. Frampton. Even from her earliest school-days—
What of that?
Or how is she concern'd in my fine riddles,
Framed for the hour's amusement?
Selby. By my *hopes*
Of my new interest conceived in you,
And by the honest passion of my heart,
Which not obliquely I to you did hint;
Come from the clouds of misty allegory,
And in plain language let me hear the worst.
Stand I disgraced, or no?
Mrs. Frampton. Then, by *my* hopes
Of my new interest conceived in you,
And by the kindling passion in *my* breast,
Which through my riddles you had almost read,
Adjured so strongly, I will tell you all.
In her school years, then bordering on fifteen,
Or haply not much past, she loved a youth—
Selby. My most ingenuous widow—
Mrs. Frampton. Met him oft
By stealth, where I still of the party was—
Selby. Prime confidant to all the school, I warrant,
And general go-between— [*Aside.*
Mrs. Frampton. One morn he came
In breathless haste. "The ship was under sail,
Or in few hours would be, that must convey
Him and his destinies to barbarous shores,
Where, should he perish by inglorious hands,
It would be consolation in his death
To have call'd his Catharine *his.*"

Selby. Thus far the story
Tallies with what I hoped. [*Aside.*
Mrs. Frampton. Wavering between
The doubt of doing wrong and losing him;
And my dissuasions not o'er hotly urged,
Whom he had flatter'd with the bridemaid's part—
Selby. I owe my subtle widow, then, for this. [*Aside.*
Mrs. Frampton. Briefly, we went to church. The ceremony
Scarcely was huddled over, and the ring
Yet cold upon her finger, when they parted—
He to his ship, and we to school got back,
Scarce miss'd, before the dinner-bell could ring.
Selby. And from that hour—
Mrs. Frampton. Nor sight nor news of him,
For aught that I could hear, she e'er obtain'd.
Selby. Like to a man that hovers in suspense
Over a letter just received, on which
The black seal hath impress'd its ominous token,
Whether to open it or no, so I
Suspended stand, whether to press my fate
Further, or check ill curiosity,
That tempts me to more loss. The name, the name
Of this fine youth?
Mrs. Frampton. What boots it, if 'twere told?
Selby. Now, by our loves,
And by my hopes of happier wedlocks, some day
To be accomplish'd, give me his name!
Mrs. Frampton. 'Tis no such serious matter. It was—Huntingdon.
Selby. How have three little syllables pluck'd from me
A world of countless hopes! [*Aside.*
Evasive widow.
Mrs. Frampton. How, sir! I like not this. [*Aside.*
Selby. No, no, I meant
Nothing but good to thee. That other woman,
How shall I call her but evasive, false,
And treacherous? by the trust I place in thee,
Tell me, and tell me truly, was the name
As you pronounced it?
Mrs. Frampton. Huntingdon—the name
Which his paternal grandfather assumed,
Together with the estates, of a remote
Kinsman: but our high-spirited youth—
Selby. Yes—
Mrs. Frampton. Disdaining

For sordid pelf to truck the family honours,
At risk of the lost estates, resumed the old style,
And answer'd only to the name of—
Selby. What—
Mrs. Frampton. Of Halford—
Selby. A Huntingdon to Halford changed so soon!
Why, then I see, a witch hath her good spells,
As well as bad, and can by a backward charm
Unruffle the foul storm she has just been raising.
[*Aside. He makes the signal.*
My frank, fair spoken widow! let this kiss,
Which yet aspires no higher, speak my thanks,
Till I can think on greater.

Enter LUCY *and* CATHARINE.

Mrs. Frampton. Interrupted!
Selby. My sister here! and see, where with her comes
My serpent gliding in an angel's form,
To taint the new-born Eden of our joys.
Why should we fear them? We'll not stir a foot,
Nor coy it for their pleasures. [*He courts the widow.*
Lucy (*to Catharine*). This your free,
And sweet ingenuous confession, binds me
For ever to you; and it shall go hard,
But it shall fetch you back your husband's heart,
That now seems blindly straying; or at worst,
In me you have still a sister. Some wives, brother,
Would think it strange to catch their husbands thus
Alone with a trim widow; but your Catharine
Is arm'd, I think, with patience.
Catharine. I am fortified
With knowledge of self-faults to endure worse wrongs,
If they be wrongs, than he can lay upon me;
Even to look on, and see him sue in earnest,
As now I think he does it but in seeming,
To that ill woman.
Selby. Good words, gentle Kate,
And not a thought irreverent of our widow.
Why, 'twere unmannerly at any time,
But most uncourteous on our wedding-day,
When we should show most hospitable. Some wine.
[*Wine is brought.*
I am for sports. And now I do remember,
The old Egyptians at their banquets placed
A charnel sight of dead men's sculls before them,

With images of cold mortality,
To temper their fierce joys when they grew rampant.
I like the custom well: and ere we crown
With freer mirth the day, I shall propose,
In calmest recollection of our spirits,
We drink the solemn "Memory of the dead—"
Mrs. Frampton. Or the supposed dead— (*Aside to him.*
Selby. Pledge me, good wife—
[*She fills.*
Nay, higher yet, till the brimm'd cup swell o'er.
Catharine. I catch the awful import of your words;
And, though I could accuse you of unkindness,
Yet as your lawful and obedient wife,
While that name lasts (as I perceive it fading,
Nor I much longer may have leave to use it)
I calmly take the office you impose;
And on my kness, imploring their forgiveness,
Whom I in heav'n or earth may have offended,
Exempt from starting tears, and woman's weakness,
I pledge you, sir—The memory of the dead!
[*She drinks, kneeling.*
Selby. 'Tis gently and discreetly said, and like
My former loving Kate.
Mrs. Frampton. Does he relent? [*Aside.*
Selby. That ceremony past, we give the day
To unabated sport. And in requital
Of certain stories and quaint allegories
Which my rare widow hath been telling to me
To raise my morning mirth, if she will lend
Her patient hearing, I will here recite
A parable; and, the more to suit her taste,
The scene is laid in the East.
Mrs. Frampton. I long to hear it.
Some tale to fit his wife. [*Aside.*
Catharine. Now comes my TRIAL.
Lucy. The hour of your deliverance is at hand,
If I presage right. Bear up, gentlest sister.
Selby. "The sultan Haroun"—stay—oh, now I have it—
"The calif Haroun in his orchards had
A fruit-tree, bearing such delicious fruits,
That he reserved them for his proper gust;
And through the palace it was death proclaim'd
To any one that should purloin the same."
Mrs. Frampton. A heavy penance for so light a fault—
Selby. Pray you, be silent, else you put me out.
"A crafty page, that for advantage watch'd,

Detected in the act a brother page
Of his own years, that was his bosom friend;
And henceforth he became that other's lord,
And like a tyrant he demean'd himself,
Laid forced exactions on his fellow's purse;
And when that poor means fail'd, held o'er his head
Threats of impending death in hideous forms;
Till the small culprit on his nightly couch
Dream'd of strange pains, and felt his body writhe
In tortuous pangs around the impaling stake."

Mrs. Frampton. I like not this beginning—

Selby. Pray you attend.

"The secret, like a night-hag, rid his sleeps,
And took the youthful pleasures from his days,
And chased the youthful smoothness from his brow,
That from a rose-cheek'd boy he waned and waned
To a pale skeleton of what he was;
And would have died but for one lucky chance."

Catharine. Oh!

Mrs. Frampton. Your wife—she faints—some cordial—smell to this.

Selby. Stand off. My sister best will do that office.

Mrs. Frampton. Are all his tempting speeches come to this? [*Aside.*

Selby. What ail'd my wife?

Catharine. A warning faintness, sir,
Seized on my spirits, when you came to where
You said "one lucky chance." I am better now,
Please you go on.

Selby. The sequel shall be brief.

Catharine. But brief or long, I feel my fate hangs on it. [*Aside.*

Selby. "One morn the calif, in a covert hid,
Close by an arbour where the two boys talk'd,
(As oft, we read, that Eastern sovereigns
Would play the eavesdropper, to learn the truth,
Imperfectly received from mouths of slaves,)
O'erheard their dialogue; and heard enough
To judge aright the cause, and know his cue.
The following day a cadi was despatched
To summon both before the judgment seat;
The lickerish culprit, almost dead with fear,
And the informing friend, who readily,
Fired with fair promises of large reward
And calif's love, the hateful truth disclosed."

Mrs. Frampton. What did the calif to the offending boy
That had so grossly err'd?
Selby. His sceptred hand
He forth in token of forgiveness stretch'd,
And clapp'd his cheeks, and courted him with gifts,
And he became once more his favourite page.
Mrs. Frampton. But for that other—
Selby. He dismiss'd him straight,
From dreams of grandeur and of calif's love,
To the bare cottage on the withering moor,
Where friends turn'd fiends, and hollow confidants
And widows hide, who in a husband's ear
Pour baneful truths, but tell not all the truth;
And told him not that Robin Halford died
Some moons before *his* marriage-bells were rung.
Too near dishonour hast thou trod, dear wife,
And on a dangerous cast our fates were set;
But Heaven, that will'd our wedlock to be bless'd,
Hath interposed to save it gracious too.
Your penance is—to dress your cheek in smiles,
And to be once again my merry Kate.
Sister, your hand;
Your wager won makes me a happy man,
Though poorer, Heav'n knows, by a thousand pounds—
The sky clears up after a dubious day.
Widow, your hand. I read a penitence
In this dejected brow; and in this shame
Your fault is buried. You shall in with us,
And, if it please you, taste our nuptial fare:
For, till this moment, I can joyful say,
Was never truly Selby's Wedding Day.

THE END.

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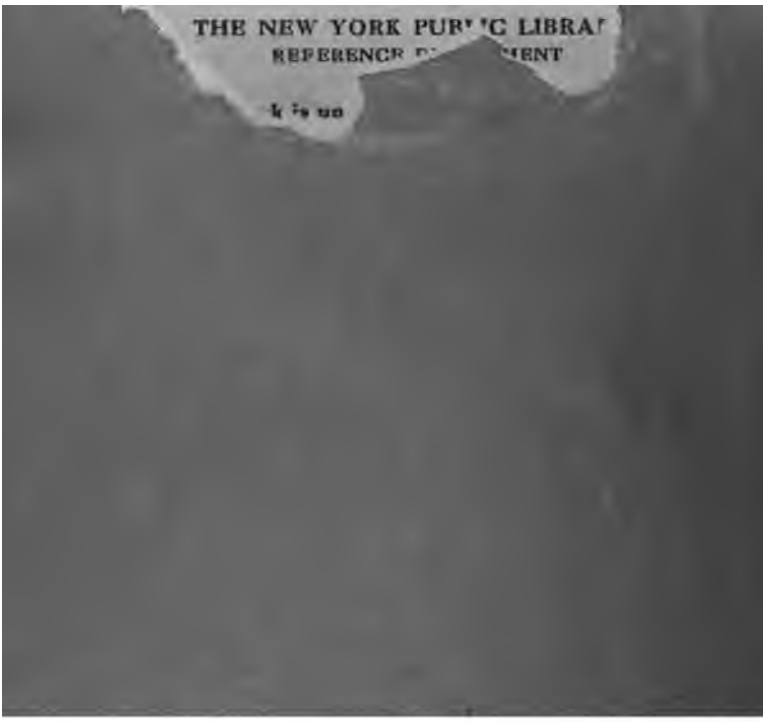
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